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THE

CONSECRATED WAY.

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Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath CONSECRATED for us, through the veil, &c.—*Heb.* x, 19,20.

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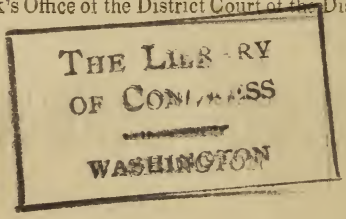

PREFACE.

EVERY man who has made it the business of his life to direct inquiring minds to the Savior, or point them to the WAY CONSECRATED by Christ, must have found from experience, that the moment the mind becomes seriously engaged with the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" difficulties, arising from a misapprehension of some of the great doctrines of religion, will immediately present themselves, interposing serious obstacles in the way of salvation.

We have many books which serve as useful guides to such as are willing to abandon all false systems of philosophy, and follow implicitly the direction of those who have kindly volunteered their services as spiritual guides; but few of these are doctrinal enough to meet the wants of that large class of serious minds who must perceive the ground upon which they stand, ere they will take a single step in the heavenward road. Nor should we regard such demands as unreasonable; for the Being who created us has constituted the intellect as the guide, by the perceptions of which the affections are to be directed to a proper object of love.

For this reason, the author has occupied more time in discussing some doctrinal points than many would think expedient, in a work bearing the title which this assumes; but every reflecting mind must perceive that the *doctrines* of religion lie as the basis of all practical duties.

If a man be not first convinced that he is a sinner, or as Paul says, "that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing," he will not perceive the duty of repentance. If he does not perceive that, there is no restoring principle in his own nature; or that he cannot be justified by works, he will not understand what necessity there is of a divine interposition in his behalf. If he does not believe Christ to be divine in his nature, he cannot receive him as the "author and finisher of his faith," but must regard him merely as an inspired teacher, whose precepts he is to obey, while he is to look to a recuperative principle in his own nature, by which he is to become holy: consequently, sin will not be felt to be so great an evil as the doctrine of a vicarious atonement implies, nor the agency of the Holy Ghost essential to his regeneration.

Thus it might be clearly shown, that any truth, in order to make an abiding impression upon the heart, must do it through the intellect, and that every practical duty which the Bible enjoins, is derived directly from some doctrine which it teaches.

To meet this want which I believe to exist, I have

endeavored, in this little manual, first to establish the doctrine, and then deriving the duty from that source, to spread it out before the mind as something *immediately* binding upon every intelligent being—thus attempting to make it a safe book to place in the hands of religious inquirers, and a pleasant companion for the maturer christian.

The fact that professors of religion need a more familiar treatise upon some of these doctrinal points than any found in our systematic works, has been felt by many pastors to such a degree, that the General Assembly* have actually taken preparatory steps to the publication of a series of doctrinal tracts. But from the nature of their action, it must necessarily be a number of years before this desirable end can be attained; and in the mean time, the press is prolific in sending forth periodicals, (especially through our western churches,) which treat of some of the vital doctrines of religion in such a way that many pastors deem them unsafe guides, and calculated to exert an unhappy influence upon minds not "thoroughly furnished" with Bible truths.

It is under these impressions that I have undertaken this work, hoping, especially, to secure the approbation of the brethren in my own ecclesiastical connexion, and at the same time give no offence to those who hold different systems of doctrine.

*Triennial.

In relation to its THEOLOGY, I have only to say, that the numerous and pointed quotations from the source of all theology, will show at least that I have attempted to be governed by the "only infallible guide."

With these prefatory remarks, I leave the reader to peruse and meditate upon the important topics herein discussed.

JAMES ROWLAND.

CHAPTER I.

MAN DESTITUTE OF HOLINESS IN HIS NATURE.

The doctrine of human depravity may be regarded as lying at the basis of the system of revealed truth, from which originate the doctrines of Atonement, Regeneration, Sanctification, and the whole superstructure of the christian faith. Though many different opinions prevail relative to the extent of his wickedness, few have denied a proposition so self-evident as that man by nature is predisposed to sin.

If this doctrine assumes so important a position in relation to other parts of revealed truth, it needs no apology for giving it a prominent place among those topics which are designed to lead him into the living way, consecrated by his Redeemer; for he must not only be convinced of its truth, as it relates to the human species generally, but he must feel it to be true in its application to himself, before he can progress a single step in his heavenward course: hence the importance which evangelical teachers have ever attached to it, and the virulence with which it has been assailed by infidel writers.

Of the origin of this sinful disposition, it is not necessary to speak at present, farther than to remind the reader that an effect so uniform and so universal must have a common cause; for it is an axiom, that "like causes produce like effects;" and if that catastrophe recorded in the word of God as its origin, be not the true cause, it becomes altogether a matter of conjecture, in which the opinion of one man is entitled to as much respect as that of another.

But before entering upon an extended discussion of this subject, I wish to direct attention to a few common mistakes, which lie as formidable objections in many minds; as it is generally the case, that the most ready way to exhibit truth is first to correct error.

Many suppose that the term depravity, in its theological signification, implies that man possesses no qualities that are estimable in the opinion of his fellow man. But any one may perceive that an individual may be a good husband, a kind parent, an obliging neighbor, and a good citizen, yet be utterly destitute of love to God, and live in total disregard of all those duties which his relations to the Creator impose. Therefore, this doctrine does not necessarily teach that man is destitute of affection in his nature, or that he utterly fails to meet his obligations to society. His natural constitution, his love

of approbation, and even the selfishness of his heart, may all conspire to produce this result.

A simple illustration will show the force of this distinction. We may easily conceive of an outlaw, living in total disregard of all duties to the government which he is bound to cherish and respect, who at the same time may possess the social virtues to such a degree, as to render him a pattern of conjugal and parental affection; but he is none the less an outlaw for this—a rebel against the constituted authorities, and amenable to the laws which he violates. So man may exhibit many amiable qualities to his fellow man, while his heart is filled with treason against God.

Neither does this doctrine teach that his intellect is incapacitated from perceiving the beauty and sublimity of the divine character, or the utility of his laws. It simply teaches that his affections are alienated, and his passions so predominant, that reason is prostrated before propensity. Before the fall, we suppose that the affections answered to the intellectual perceptions in such a manner, that whatever was perceived to be worthy of love and obedience, the heart obeyed spontaneously; but with that calamity the harmony between the intellectual and moral faculties was destroyed, so that the affections are no longer enlisted toward that Being whom the intellect discerns to be truly lovely.

As the term total depravity, has been frequently

employed as a theological phrase, many have supposed that to warrant the application of this superlative term, a man must first give evidence of a wicked intent in every act of his life; and that if all mankind are said to be totally depraved, then all must exhibit an equal amount of wickedness. But this term in no case implies that the wickedness of the heart is equally *developed* in the human race: it merely refers to that state which leads all men to acts of trespass under the influence of a sufficient motive; but as the circumstances and surrounding influences of every man are different from those of another, this disposition is unequally developed, and many causes may interpose to prevent the awful manifestations in some, which we behold in others.

The depravity of man consists in the first place, in a total destitution of affection toward a holy God, which evinces most clearly a want of holiness in his own nature; for if man were holy himself, he would love all holy beings. And in the second place, it is manifested in feelings of positive dislike to his character, government and laws; which is clearly exhibited by his opposition and disobedience.

Others have supposed that because man worships some being or beings invested with the attributes of the Deity, thus giving evidence of a kind of religious feeling in his nature, he cannot be so depraved as this doctrine teaches; therefore he

has been characterized by them as a "religious animal."

It is supposed to be impossible for the heart to be entirely destitute of a right disposition, when through ignorance of the nature and character of God, it attempts to render him homage by these acts of devotion.

But this argument, if rightly considered, is the one which most clearly evinces his depravity; because those very beings that he enshrines in his affections and worships with religious rites, are themselves a personification of the worst passions of our nature, and are in fact more fit representatives of the devil than of a holy God. Here the question arises at once, Why does man invariably fall into this error, unless it be "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *is* only evil continually?"*

If the heathen amid all his idolatry, invested his deities with the attributes of Jehovah, and then indicated his veneration by sacrifices and other religious rites, the argument would be entitled to some consideration. But look at the Baal and Moloch of sacred history, the Saturn,† Venus and Bacchus of classic literature, and the Seva, Vishnu and Juggernaut of modern heathenism, and consider the

* Gen. vi, 5.

† The Saturn of the Greeks, and Moloch of the Ammonites, are supposed to be identical, and were worshipped by offering human sacrifices.

bloody and obscene rites with which they have been worshipped in all ages, and how is it possible to resist the impression, that instead of venerating God, they have rendered homage to *personified devils?*

It is not only a scriptural truth, but a matter of common observation, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;"* therefore, we naturally conclude that it is a depraved heart and wicked imagination which has led man into this fatal error. Nor is this feature in the human character restricted to the heathen mind, for we find the same principle existing in those who are better instructed relative to the nature and character of God.

Wherever unregenerate men have professed a love for the Supreme Being, they have first divested him of some of the most essential attributes of his nature—his justice, his truth, or his wisdom, have been impeached, his character changed, and disrobed of its essential glory, before he has even become an object of professed admiration to the natural heart.

The reason of this species of enlightened idolatry is apparent, from the fact that in these attributes lies the certainty of his punishing the wicked, "with everlasting destruction from the presence of the

* Mat. xii. 34.

Lord and the glory of his power."* Therefore, the sinful heart revolts at the idea of his punitive justice and his absolute sovereignty. As a direct consequence of this, it rejects those denunciations which the Bible directs to all transgressors, and cavils at that revelation which unfolds what God has done, and still threatens to do, with all those who break his laws.

Now the question naturally suggests itself, that if the heart were not destitute of holiness, would there not sometimes arise a spontaneous love for a holy Being? And is it not because God is holy and man wicked, that his heart is so filled with enmity to his character and government?

The same feeling and disposition which has been already referred to, is still more actively exhibited in the opposition which man has ever manifested to a righteous law. The law of God may be regarded as the transcript of his mind and character, where the greatness of the one and purity of the other are both represented to his intelligent creatures.

The sublimity and utility of this the human intellect is capable of perceiving, because, wherever man has become acquainted with it, he has made it the basis of his own legislation. How then does it happen, that he universally transgresses what he so clearly perceives to be right, unless it is because it

*2 Thess. i, 9.

runs counter to all his natural propensities? This law is the work of a holy Being, and adapted to the government of holy beings; therefore, where there is a destitution of holiness in the nature, it becomes in every respect uncongenial as a rule of life. If man were holy in his nature, he would love and obey this law; and the fact that he uniformly transgresses it, should be taken as the clearest evidence of his wickedness,—for, says Paul, "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and as a proof of this, adds, "for it is not subject to the laws of God, neither indeed can be."*

Nothing is plainer than that if a man loved and respected his sovereign, he would obey his laws, or if a child were possessed of proper feelings toward his parent, he would live in subjection to his authority—disobedience in either case would be sufficient evidence of a destitution of love or even respect.

Then if amid the hundreds of millions who have existed on our globe, we cannot find the history of a single individual, who from his first moral acts, has rendered obedience to this perfect rule, the doctrine of human depravity must stand, with all its fearful consequences to our race. This cannot be considered as an unfair argument, because it would be as natural for a holy being to obey a holy law as

* Rom. viii, 7.

it is for a sinful being to transgress it. Man as a moral being, cannot possess a negative or neutral character: if his nature be not holy, of course it is sinful, and every act of his mind and purpose of soul is either holy or sinful.

But this destitution of holiness is still farther indicated by the opposition which virtue has ever encountered in the world.

Socrates, though a heathen and unacquainted with a perfect rule of action, was too virtuous to be endured by the generation with whom he lived, therefore they gave him poison; and the only being of perfect virtue that ever adorned human nature, by exhibiting the perfections of the Deity himself—"God manifest in the flesh"*—was so hated by mankind that they preferred a robber before him.

These thoughts might be expanded to a volume, and the whole history of man arrayed to prove the positions here assumed; but the observation and reading of every intelligent person, will furnish illustrations more than sufficient to convince him that man by nature is destitute of holiness.

Though the character may be externally fair and the life in many respects unexceptionable, there is something within the breast, which renders every man conscious of an utter destitution of love to God.

*1 Tim. iii, 16.

and that he possesses such a nature as is ascribed to the natural man by inspired teachers.*

This view of the human character which we have taken, only regards it in a negative aspect, as destitute of right affections and feelings toward the Creator. If we were to leave the subject here, the doctrine of depravity would be clearly proven; but justice and humanity demand, that we enter within the secret chambers of the soul, and by the lamp of truth reveal even its hidden deformities.

I suppose, reader, that if you were affected with a deep and painful ulcer, you would be willing to have it probed, that you might be aware of the extent of its ravages, even though it were the occasion of exquisite torture; and it would be only when convinced of your desperate condition, that you would submit to the use of desperate remedies. So it is that you will not apply to Christ, the great Physician, until you are aware that without his aid, you are ruined past recovery. The efforts of the natural man are all expended in attempts to cover up and conceal the dark shades of his character from others, and even from himself. It is therefore necessary to show you, that the heart is not only destitute of holiness, but actively sinful, and the residence of many base and malignant passions described

* Rom. i, 30; iii, 18; viii, 7.

in the word of God,* which are continually urging you to the commission of sin.

This view of human character generally, and of your own in particular, may present a dark and fearful picture; but shrink not from its contemplation, for the first step in the way of salvation, is to become sensible of your destitution.

The soul must be humbled before it can be exalted—it must become sensible of its guilt before it can perceive the beauty of holiness, and without holiness it cannot be admitted into heaven.†

* Rom. i, 21-32; iii, 10-18. † Heb. xii, 14.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURAL HEART ACTIVELY SINFUL.

The physiognomy of every individual presents exactly the same features, in number and kind, and each particular feature bears a general resemblance to a corresponding organ in another; yet no two human faces are exactly alike.

This may be taken as a very good illustration of the human character. Every heart possesses the same constituent or general features, though they may not be equally developed in all; and the predominance of some one of these over the rest, gives that endless variety of character which we behold in society.

When, therefore, we speak of mankind collectively, as filled with wicked passions and imaginations, we mean to be understood that these are inherent in every heart; but when we attempt to detail the elements of this wickedness, we shall find, that in some, a particular passion, or propensity, may exist only in so slight a degree, that its presence is not easily detected; while in others, it may

predominate to such an extent, as to warrant the appellation of human monsters.

The object of this chapter will be to exhibit some of these constituents of character—to show the misery which they produce—their disorganizing influence upon society, and how destructive they are to human happiness.

The first of these which demands passing notice, is Selfishness. Instead of being governed in his conduct by supreme love to God, and equal love to his neighbor, man has enthroned self within his heart, so that all his plans and purposes terminate in the single object of individual happiness. This selfish disposition which belongs to the human character, is wicked, when it seeks happiness from forbidden sources, or by unlawful means, and as a consequence becomes productive of misery to the human family. If we were to investigate minutely the causes of most of the suffering which afflicts our race, we should probably trace it directly to the predominance of this passion in the heart.

Nothing is more common than to observe evidences of extreme suffering—features shriveled and limbs emaciated by hunger, and even helpless infancy shivering from cold and nakedness, while perhaps in the very next dwelling, there are superfluities enough to feed the hungry and clothe the naked of an entire neighborhood. Who that has looked with the eye of a philosopher, or even of a

philanthropist, has not been filled with astonishment and compassion at the striking contrasts which present themselves in every city? At one moment he may be in danger of being crushed by the gay equipage of some heartless aristocrat, and the next, of being contaminated by contact with one of those miserable creatures, who seek a precarious subsistence from the very filth of the gutter.

Much of this suffering is doubtless to be ascribed to the vice and improvidence of the subjects themselves; but by far the greatest share is to be traced directly to the avarice and selfishness of the human heart.

In an investigation recently instituted by the British parliament, relative to the condition of the mining districts of England, it was found that in some of these, such scenes of cruelty and suffering were exhibited, as find no parallel, even in American slavery. Among other things, it was officially reported, that female children were harnessed to cars, where, from the contracted nature of the passages, they were compelled, like brutes, to crawl *on all fours*. And here they grow up to womanhood, secluded from the light of day, destitute of clothing, and perfectly insensible to all feelings of modesty.

If these things are permitted in society where there is a great comparative degree of moral elevation, and where the precepts of the gospel are admitted to be intrinsically excellent in their nature,

what must be the degree of selfishness in the dispositions of those who can luxuriate upon wealth, obtained by the degradation of their fellow beings to a level with the brute creation.

But it is only under the influence of peculiar circumstances, that we are to look for the most startling developments of this passion. Mankind, under protracted suffering, seem at times to be divested of all sympathy for their fellow men, and even of that natural affection which is one of the strongest passions of the heart.

To show the extent to which selfishness may prevail, and the consequence of its extreme development, two or three instances will be referred to, taken from authentic history.*

During the fatal march of Napoleon's army from Moscow, the horrors of their situation, and the individual suffering experienced, seemed to annihilate all sympathy for others. When a poor creature, overcome by fatigue or benumbed with cold, would entreat them not to leave him to a miserable death, their reply was generally accompanied with some heartless jest. And so long as an individual was possessed of the few comforts which his situation afforded, the condition of others seemed to excite no sympathy. They could even strip a companion of his few tattered garments, whenever it became

* Allison.

apparent that he was no longer able to keep pace with the march of the army. Also, during the prevalence of the plague among the French troops in Egypt, if one was seen to reel and fall gasping on the desert, all the sympathy which his suffering excited was generally expressed in some miserable attempt at buffoonery. They would even mock his death agony, by imitating the convulsive movements of his distorted countenance. And again, after the battle of Heilsberg, says the same historian, "the next morning the space between the contending armies, about one-fourth of a mile broad and a mile in length, presented a sheet of naked human bodies, the greater part dead, but some showing by their motions that they preserved consciousness, or implored relief. Six thousand corpses were lying as close as they had stood in the ranks, *stripped during the night of every rag of clothing*, by the cupidity of the camp followers of either army, ghastly, pale, or purple with the blood which was still oozing from their wounds."

These instances, among many thousands of a similar character, only exhibit the true nature of selfishness, by showing us what it has done, and what it will do, when it predominates over every other passion. Shipwrecked mariners soon glare upon each other with cannibal eyes, regarding their fellow sufferers only as the means of preserving their own life. Mothers have stifled the voice of

nature, and sacrificed their own offspring to save themselves from suffering and death.

It is not claimed, that every individual, even under similar circumstances, would exhibit an equal degree of selfishness; but that it is a passion belonging to the human heart, and existing in some degree in every breast.

Revenge is another passion which constitutes a prominent feature in the human character. To the natural man, "revenge is sweet;" and actuated by his native passions merely, he would never submit patiently to a real or imaginary wrong; but in every case would repay insult with insult, and injury with injury.

Were we to judge him by the practice of savage nations, we should suppose that nothing is so congenial to his nature as the work of vengeance. This has been the cause of continued war and bloodshed in all countries and in all ages; but notwithstanding its baneful effects upon society, it is even now exalted by many as a virtue of the highest order.

Those who live under the restraints of public opinion, moulded by that gospel which enjoins meekness, humility and forbearance, even under injury, can form but little conception of what man will do to gratify this predominant passion of his nature. But to judge correctly of his disposition, we must view him under circumstances where he is permit-

ted to act out that nature and exhibit his true character in all its native deformity,—for if we attribute to native goodness that conduct which is enforced by artificial restraint, or coerced by salutary laws, our conclusions must be false. This passion has been manifested in its terrible results, by all classes of men, and under all circumstances in life, from the sovereign who wreaks his vengeance upon a weaker nation, to the untamed savage who exults in the writhings of his tortured enemy. And we perceive something of the strength of its dominion over the human heart, when we find that notwithstanding the barriers erected by society, enlightened and educated men will disregard them all—murdering in cold blood those from whom they have received a real or supposed insult.

Another element of the human character deserving our notice, is Ambition; the unrestrained indulgence of which has been productive of as much misery and suffering as any single cause.

The unhallowed ambition of a single individual has bathed whole nations in tears, reddened whole provinces with human blood, and spread desolation and death, in their most horrid forms, throughout the world. Famine, pestilence, and suffering of every kind, have been but secondary evils resulting from its dominion over the heart. Under its baneful influence, men naturally humane, have contemplated the sacrifice of thousands of their fellow

beings with as little concern as though they had been insects. Urged on in his guilty career by this passion, man has broken the ties of nature and murdered his nearest kin — he has violated all the finer feelings and shocked the sensibilities of his own heart — he has massacred — plundered and ravaged cities, driving out the wretched inhabitants by the light of their consuming dwellings — he has swam through rivers of blood, that he might sit in short-lived glory upon a throne reared with human skulls. In short, there is hardly a crime within the range of human conception, which has not been perpetrated under the influence of this unholy passion.

It is not safe for us to conclude, because these exhibitions of its terrible power have been comparatively rare, that it exists only in a few such characters as Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon; for a careful examination will discover it to be that element in every character, which leads directly to the performance of many acts of wrong and injustice, though perhaps upon a smaller scale, because connected with less capacity; or existing under such different circumstances as not to call forth its extreme development.

But the last and most dreadful of all the features of human depravity, that the limits to which this subject must necessarily be restricted, will permit us to notice, is Malignity, or delight in beholding suffering. Few persons are sensible of the exis-

tence even of the germ of such a fiendish passion as this within their own heart; yet it is an element of human character which, in some instances, has given fearful manifestations of its presence.

Who that has observed the child in his youthful sports, has not seen him watch with pleasure the writhings of the little insect which he has impaled upon the point of a pin? Would he do this, if there was nothing in his nature which experienced a sensible gratification by the exhibition of suffering? Now, this is nothing less than the first and faintest exhibition of the same passion which predominated in the heart of Nero or Antiochus.

That we may be more deeply impressed with the strength of human passion, let us notice one or two historical incidents affording an exhibition of this malignant feeling. Antiochus Epiphanes, the bloody persecutor of the Jews, "seized seven brothers, commonly called the Maccabees, and having ordered brazen cauldrons to be heated to redness, he then cut out the tongue of the eldest and tore the skin from his head, cut off the hands and feet before his *mother* and brethren, and after being thus mutilated, he was brought near the fire and tormented by heat, and finally *fried in an immense pan.* After this, he proceeded in the same manner with the others; and last of all, after having been compelled to witness these dreadful tortures of her children,

the mother was put to death." Nero caused hundreds of the early christians to be clothed in garments saturated with pitch, and then commanded them to be set on fire in the public gardens, to amuse the populace, while from a balcony he beheld their tortures with fiendish delight, as they fled in desperation, vainly seeking to alleviate their suffering. What must have been the degree of malignity in all those who could behold such spectacles as these with pleasure.

No one will question but that such incidents afford the most terrible evidence of malignity in those who participate in them; but history is full of similar cases. The numerous and ingenious instruments which have been constructed, the slow and painful deaths which they have produced, show us that man has tasked his genius to the utmost with inventions by which to gratify this passion, till we are constrained to say, in relation to the human race, as Jacob did to an individual, "cursed be thine anger, for it was fierce, and thy wrath, for it was cruel."*

We have thus far only noticed four constituents of the human character, with a view to understand how the *inordinate* development of any one of them has filled the world with suffering. These elements of character, with many others not enumerated, such as pride, envy, jealousy, and the like, exist in

* Gen. xlix, 7.

a greater or less degree in every son and daughter of Adam, and together constitute the depravity of his heart; for "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."* These terrible instances of wickedness have not been detailed merely to shock the sensibilities of a more refined nature, but to impress the mind with the depth of that depravity into which human nature sometimes sinks, and to show that the word of God has not misrepresented mankind, when it says, "the works of the flesh are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like;"† or given an untrue picture of the heart, when it is represented as being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, *covetousness*, *maliciousness;* full of envy, *murder*, debate, deceit, *malignity;* whisperers, backbiters, *haters of God*, despiteful; proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, *implacable*, *unmerciful.*‡

Nor have mankind been slandered as a race, when it says of them, that "they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat

* Math. xv, 19. † Gal. v, 19–21. ‡ Rom. i, 29–31.

is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. *Their feet are swift to shed blood:* destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."*

This may present a humiliating picture of human nature; yet it is the language of Him who created us, and who is better acquainted with our constitution than we are with ourselves. Though some are disposed to deny it in theory, the practice of all confirms a belief in their internal conviction of its truth. Man everywhere assumes that his fellow creature possesses these traits of character until he has proof of the contrary—for this reason he will not trust a stranger with his money, or leave his property exposed in such a way as to tempt the cupidity of the human heart.

If an individual were wrecked upon a savage coast, he would not fear the elements of nature, beating in all their fury upon his unprotected head, or even the ferocious beast that inhabits the jungle, as he would the cruelty and malignity of the more ferocious savage.

These things speak of our internal convictions with more truth than do abstract theories, because

* Rom. iii, 12–18.

they show that man knows what are the dominant passions of his own nature, and trembles before their unrestrained violence.

It thus appears, that he has become so entirely estranged from God, that his character presents a perfect contrast to the character of God. His affections are alienated, his will perverted, and his heart the seat of corrupt passions, (instead of holy emotions,) which have entailed all these calamities under which he suffers.*

How melancholy the sight to behold a beautiful temple, chiseled and sculptured into classic elegance, blackened and crumbling amid the flames! But how much more saddening to the heart, to see a creature created in the likeness of Divinity, so fallen and ruined and covered with pollution, as to obliterate all traces of his original character.

Perhaps the reader will be inclined to regard this as a too highly colored picture of the human heart; but it is simply a *history* of the actions of mankind, and the language of Him who is acquainted with those hidden springs which lie buried deep from human observation,—and more than this, it is sustained also by the *consciousness* of every individual, or his knowledge of what is within his own heart.

The reason why we are not more painfully sen-

* Rom. vi, 23.

sible of this moral deformity, will be given in the next chapter. But before passing on to other topics, let me inquire of the reader whether he is not conscious that these are some of the elements of his own nature, and whether these unholy psssions have not led him to the commission of many sins against God.

If this be true, in what way do you expect to justify your conduct in the sight of that Being who is said to be of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity."* You cannot expect to roll back the burden of your guilt upon Adam, because you know that your *own voluntary* sins have been more than sufficient to condemn you.

Then become a willing pupil, while I attempt still farther to discover the secret working of the human heart, that by a conviction of its utter vileness, you may be incited to seek for moral renovation, in the way which God has revealed to us.

* Heb. i, 13.

CHAPTER III.

THE NATURAL HEART DECEITFUL.

Our attention thus far has been occupied chiefly with an examination into the tendency of what are called the natural passions. If the truth of those positions which have been advanced, is admitted, it will be a subject of some interest to investigate the causes which prevent men from feeling and acknowledging this corruption of their nature.

The reason of this is probably two-fold. First, because few persons are aware of the extent to which the ravages of sin have deformed and polluted their own hearts, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* And second, because when it is discovered, the pride of their nature is immediately aroused in such a way as to lead them to attempt its concealment.

A principal reason why men are so often deceived in relation to themselves, is because they neglect to take into account those circumstances which exert

* Jer. xvii, 9.

an important influence in moulding the character. Every man who lives in a christian land, esteems himself better than a heathen. But is he warranted in assuming, that if he had been born in India, he would not exhibit the same evidences of depravity and wickedness, as are manifested by the Hindoo? If this be true, then he has mistaken that which is merely the result of circumstances, for native virtue.

Thousands are surrounded by these restraining influences, from infancy to manhood, which have prevented the full development of their natural passions. Thus by mistaking for inherent virtue that which is enforced by artificial restraints, they are deceived in relation to their true nature. Others have embraced an error no less mischievous, by going to the opposite extreme, and maintaining that man is altogether the "creature of circumstance;" and this to such an extent as to justify his wickedness, or at least, destroy his accountability.

It is claimed by the advocates of this theory, that these circumstances which exert a powerful influence in moulding character and determining the life, are beyond the control of man; therefore, he is not answerable for their results. It is necessary briefly to notice this objection here, in order to prevent a misapprehension of what will be advanced in relation to this part of the subject. Its absurdity may be discovered at once, by carrying out the system to its ultimate results. If it will justify the

transgressor of divine law, let it also justify the transgressor of human law; for they operate as powerfully in one case as in the other; consequently the thief and the murderer should be acquitted, when they can show by evidence that they were educated in the school of vice. But while some advocate a doctrine like this in theory, it is practically repudiated by every one, in the punishment of crime committed under all circumstances.

Though this doctrine, when advanced as a justification of wickedness, is false and dangerous in its tendency; yet it is doubtless true of every individual, that he cannot tell what would have been his own character under different circumstances, and influenced by different motives. Hence arises the deception of his heart.

This fact, which none will be disposed to deny, seems to warrant a division of depravity into two kinds: Latent and Active. Which distinction, while it assumes that the heart is naturally averse to the practice of virtue, and disposed to all kinds of wickedness, and that this disposition inheres in every individual, also accounts for the unequal development of it which we behold in society.

Latent depravity, is that native corruption which leads to acts of wickedness, under the influence of sufficient motives; and may be represented by the spark and the fuel, ready to ignite by the fanning of the first breeze, but for the present smothered and

concealed. While *Active* depravity, is the development of this corruption under the influence of such motives; or, it is the flame burst forth in fury, raging and consuming all before it.

The propriety of such a distinction, may be illustrated by the opposite conduct of an individual under different circumstances, of which we have a striking example in the case of Hazael.

Benhadad was sick, and hearing that a great prophet had come into his country, he sent his favorite servant with rich presents, to inquire what would be the event of his sickness. When this servant came into the presence of Elisha, after regarding him a few moments with fixed attention, the prophet turned away his face and wept. Astonished at such a reception as this, Hazael inquired, "Why weepeth my lord?" and Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil which thou wilt do unto Israel. Their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, "But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

Notwithstanding the detestation here manifested of crimes so black as those enumerated by the prophet, he returned to his master and commenced his guilty career by strangling Benhadad in his bed.*

The question suggested by this incident is, whe-

*2 Kings, viii, 7-15.

ther there was any change in the nature of Hazael; or was this only the *development* of the depravity of his heart? He must have possessed the elements of cruelty and ambition in his natural constitution; yet while there was no particular temptation to call them into active exercise, he remained a peaceable, trusty minister. But the moment that motives of sufficient weight were placed before his mind, it fanned into fury the latent spark. The road to greatness and power was opened before him. The sceptre of Syria was within his reach, and grasp it he would, though he must first palsy the hand which then held it. Therefore, it is probable that Hazael did not know his own heart, when he replied to Elisha in the manner recorded.

There was doubtless a period in the life of Elizabeth of England, when, if she had been told that she was to cause the death of her relative and heir—the daughter of a long line of kings, and the lawful sovereign of another kingdom, while claiming her protection and hospitality—she would have replied as Hazael did. Yet, when surrounded by the embarrassments which this unfortunate queen occasioned, she shrunk not from the bloody deed, and Mary's head rolled from beneath the executioner's axe, the victim of female jealousy. Or, could Napoleon, in early life, have viewed the scenes of Jaffa, Marengo, Austerlitz, Waterloo, and the hundreds of other fields which he afterwards covered

with carnage—and could the blood of these slaughtered millions have been turned into one purple stream, flowing through this field of death, he might have regarded it as a price too dear to pay for an imperial crown. But having once embarked in his career of fortune, even this was not permitted to stand between his ambition and its object.

Now, is it not apparent, that had he not possessed a nature equal to these deeds of cruelty and injustice, he could not have committed them? For no possible combination of circumstances could have developed traits of character which did not exist. It may be objected, that because the cases are comparatively few, where such a depth of depravity has been attained, these ought to be considered as exceptions to the general character of mankind. But, if placed in precisely the same circumstances, is it not probable that a large majority would have pursued a similar course? If these things are admitted, then it is apparent that much of the difference which we behold in character, depends upon those circumstances that are not taken into account in our estimate of mankind.

When we behold one man enjoying the confidence of a community because of his integrity, and another detested for his dishonesty, we at once decide that there is a wide difference in their natural dispositions. But if we were to examine into the circumstances of their early life, and understand

the different influences which have moulded their respective characters, we might justly attribute it in a great measure to these. Perhaps we should find that one was the child of pious parents, who from infancy taught him to fear God and keep his commandments. In early life he may have been taken by the hand and introduced into a respectable and lucrative business, and through the influence of these favoring circumstances, he may have been kept from overpowering temptation; while the other has been educated in the school of vice; the example and influence of wicked parents may have lead him to commit crime before he understood its nature, thus taught (as many are) to exercise his youthful faculties in theft and deception, the whole pathway of vice and its attendant disgrace, opens to him as naturally as the way of virtue does to the other.

Or, we may suppose the case of two females, one, educated amid the refinements of polished society; and the other, born and reared in the house of infamy, where her ear early becomes inured to the language of licentiousness, and her own parent the agent who plots her ruin.

Illustrations of this nature from authenticated cases, might be cited to an unlimited extent, but these are sufficient to show that the differences which we behold in society, result more from peculiar circumstances than from *native goodness* in any.

Men sometimes flatter themselves, that because they are more virtuous in life than some, they are less depraved by nature; whereas the difference is caused by the fact that they have never been tempted like others; nor can a man understand his own heart, unless he knows how he would act under all circumstances of temptation and trial. Because he has never committed great crimes against society, he is not warranted in believing himself destitute of that native corruption which would lead to the commission of almost any act of wickedness, under different circumstances. If he is not now openly pursuing the paths of vice, and numbered among the pests of society, he may be more indebted to circumstances for his preservation than to any inherent virtue in his own nature.

These things by no means prove that man is not responsible for every act of wickedness under any circumstances; nor is it supposed that every individual would act alike under the same temptations; because, though these may exert an influence in determining the life, they never can coerce a voluntary being. This objection has already been answered, by showing that it is contrary to our own consciousness and sense of justice, to suppose that man is the victim of circumstance; therefore, we hold every one responsible for his acts, whatever may have been the influences by which his character has been moulded.

Doubtless the guilt of an individual who breaks over all those restraints which good example and early instruction impose, is greater than the same crime would be where no such influences had been felt; but to determine their relative degrees of guilt is not the question involved in the present subject. The only point to be decided here, is whether even the most unfavorable circumstances would call forth these evidences of wickedness in the heart, if it were not disposed by its own constitution to follow the seduction of vice, and whether these differences which have been noticed, are not the cause of universal self-deception.

The Bible surely is explicit upon these points, when it speaks of mankind as so corrupted in one age, that "*every thought*, and imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually;"* and in another age declares that "there is none that doeth good,—no, not one,"† for "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."‡ "Death hath passed upon all men, for that *all* have sinned."‖ Then, as if to reveal the cause of his blindness in relation to this fundamental truth, it declares that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it."§

*Gen. vi, 5. †Rom. iii, 10. ‡Rom. ii, 23. ‖Rom. v, 12. §Jer. xvii, 9.

Perhaps the reader is one of those who have been ushered into life under such restraining influences, that he has never perceived the depths of pollution which lie concealed in his own heart.

But you surely know enough of your own nature to admit that it is probable that if you had been left to follow out the desires of your own nature, or had you not been restrained by almost impassable barriers, your situation might be very different from what it is at the present moment.

Instead, therefore, of flattering yourself because you are so virtuous, you should exercise gratitude to God, because he has made you to differ from others; or you might have inhabited the house of her whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell;* or your hands might have been stained with the blood of a brother. Instead of self-gratulation that you are not as other men,—extortioners, unjust, adulterers,—sensible of the wickedness of your heart, you should bow in self-abasement before God, and in the language of a true penitent cry, "God be merciful unto me, a sinner."†

* Prov. v, 5. † Luke xviii, 11.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHARACTER OF MAN UNIVERSALLY WICKED.

HAVING examined the constituents of human character in the preceding pages, it seems necessary to the completion of this subject, to ascertain whether the aspect of society in all ages, will warrant such a representation of human nature as has been made. But far from finding a palliation here, when we look at the history of society, we shall find that this is only needed to complete the humiliating picture.

If we revert for a moment to the history of those nations most celebrated for learning and refinement, and examine into their true condition—divested of that halo of glory with which modern philosophers have enshrined them—and look at their wars, their jealousies, their assassinations, and their cruelty, we shall probably find our veneration both for their sages and governments somewhat abated.

"There is scarcely a vice that can be named, but in some age or country has been countenanced by

public opinion. In one country it was esteemed an office of piety in children to slay their parents. Cicero and Seneca, taught that suicide was commendable heroism. Cato, Brutus, and Cassius, practiced it. Aristotle lays it down as a self-evident maxim, that nature intended barbarians to be slaves. Theft was rewarded by the laws of Sparta. Aristippus maintained that it was lawful for a wise man to steal, commit adultery and sacrilege, when opportunity offered. Crimes of which we are not now permitted to speak, have had their advocates among sages of renown."

Because the son of Demetrius once came into the presence of his father with hunting weapons by his side, he called in the ambassadors from foreign countries to witness the wonderful spectacle, that they might publish it to the world and hand it down to posterity, as an unparalleled instance of parental confidence.

What are we to think of that state of society, where this incident is paraded forth on the page of history, as an evidence of its extraordinary perfection? It is in vain that we single an example of individual virtue, shining forth from the rest like a lone star in the blackness of night; for every reader of history must perceive from their long and bloody wars, from their barbarous inhumanity toward captives, as well as from their intestine disorders and

commotions, *depravity* stamped upon the human character, and recorded in letters of blood on the page of history.

Nor can we find anything in modern heathenism to relieve the dark picture. On the contrary, we are led to the conclusion that the lapse of time, instead of elevating the human character, has only sunk it to a still deeper degradation; except in such portions of the world as have been rescued by the transforming power of the gospel.

"The universal characteristic of the Hindoo has been described to be, habitual disregard to truth, pride, tyranny, theft, falsehood, deceit, conjugal infidelity, filial disobedience, ingratitude, a litigious spirit, perjury, treachery, covetousness, gaming, servility, hatred, revenge, cruelty, private murder, want of tenderness and compassion to the poor, the sick and dying." In the province of Bengal alone, ten thousand children are murdered in a single month, and one hundred and twenty thousand in a year. The moral and religious state of China, notwithstanding their knowledge of the arts and sciences, is not much less degraded. In the city of Pekin, it is computed that nine thousand children are annually destroyed, and a proportionate number in the rest of the empire.

Says father Ripa, "When mothers are poor and have large families, or observe any defect upon the

body of the infant, or any indication of illness likely to become troublesome and expensive, they cast away the little creature without remorse.

"This cruel custom is also generally practised by unmarried women who have children, especially by the members of a sect called Necoo, who pretend to live in spotless chastity. Not far from the walls of Pekin, I myself saw an infant under the paws of a dog, and another between the teeth of a hog."

"Most of the forms of mythology, which make any figure in the page of history, now exist in China. They have gods celestial, terrestrial and subterranean; gods of the hills, of the valleys, of woods, of districts, of families, of the shops, and of the kitchen; gods that preside over the thunder, the rain, the fire, the grain, diseases, births and deaths."

Thus we perceive that modern heathenism presents the same dark features of depravity. It exhibits the smoke of the funeral pile curling up from hundreds of altars, reeking with the incense of human sacrifice—its idol tower creaking and groaning, as it drags heavily over the plain, grinding some devoted victim to the dust at each turn of its ponderous wheels; and its sacred river the scene of thousands of parricides and infanticides, and polluting the atmosphere with its putrifying carcases.

"In the continuance and downward progress of heathenism, we have a melancholy illustration of

the fact, that man having broken away from God, has no elastic energy within his own heart to bring him back, and the effect of time has only been to deepen the darkness and drive him farther away, they adore more shapeless blocks, and bow before more hideous idols, and worship in more polluted temples. No idol of the heathen world will compare with the statue of Minerva, at Athens; no temple can compare with the Parthenon; no sentiment originating in China, India or Africa, equals in sublimity and purity the views of Socrates. Man in a state of nature has only become more degraded, more abominable, more pitiable from age to age."*

But we need not go into benighted portions of the globe, or back to the dark ages for abundant proof of the wickedness of the human heart. If we examine the statute books of the most enlightened nations on the globe, while our minds may be filled with admiration at their excellence as a system of law, we cannot resist the conviction that these penal enactments against every crime which it is possible for man to commit, are made for just that character which the Bible ascribes to man—fallen and depraved man; the corruptions of whose heart are continually breaking the bounds of natural and civil law, and spreading their pestiferous influence over society. The question suggests itself at once,

* Barnes' Miss. sermon.

would these laws have been enacted, if the crimes at which they aim were not committed? If we pursue the investigation farther, and notice the means which laws and humanity have provided to secure the vicious and protect the virtuous, the impression will be deepened upon the mind, that if God made man upright, he has sought out many inventions.* Witness the many ingenious guards by which common prudence requires our property to be secured; the long rolls of parchment and signatures of witnesses by which our rights are guarded and perpetuated; the dark and frowning walls of numerous prisons, and that awful monument of human wickedness, the gallows—and what impressions does the survey leave upon the mind? Whatever may be the language of theory respecting the character of man, the universal language of the conduct is, that he "is desperately wicked."

The truth of this doctrine has been strenuously insisted upon because of its important relation to all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible.

If we were to discard it and maintain that the powers of man are not utterly perverted, it would follow that he can by his own unaided strength, obey the law of God, therefore needs no divine interposition; for if man obeys the law of God, he can be saved by the law, and it is an insult to offer

* Rev. xxi, 27.

him salvation by grace, when it is no grace, but simply an act of justice. It is no less absurd to suppose that heaven would have witnessed the incarnation of its king to redeem man, when all that he would need under those circumstances would be light and direction to enter the way *not* consecrated by Christ, but opened on Mount Sinai, amid thunderings and lightnings, and thick vapors, and the sound of the trumpet. And if there be a conservative principle in the nature of man, he needs no Regenerator or Sanctifier, to purify him for heaven. If, then, he needs none of these agencies for his restoration to the favor of God, why may he not be recovered after death? And if he may be recovered in another world, then it follows, that this world is not a state of probation; for probation implies reward and punishment in future.

Take out the doctrines of justification by faith, the atonement, the agency of the Holy Spirit, future punishment, and present probation, and what is there left, but a cold and heartless system of infidelity?

Before we venture to deny a doctrine so important as this, we should perceive its relation to other truths; for to remove it is to knock out the foundation of the whole system and prostrate it in ruins. But established upon this foundation, each doctrine may rest in its turn, and the whole becomes a building fitly joined together, growing into a holy temple.

The reader must have perceived ere this, that if God possesses the holiness in his nature ascribed to him by inspired writers, and man the character delineated in the preceding pages, one or the other must be changed before there can be any mutual attraction. And if heaven be that pure and holy place, where nothing can enter that worketh abomination or maketh a lie,* these passions must be subdued, and other emotions pervade the heart, before the soul can mingle with the spirits of the just made perfect.† Suffer me then to direct your attention to a single point, which may dispose your mind to appreciate that plan which God has devised to recover and save you.

You must be sensible of the fact, that the legal relation which you sustain to God, is that of an offender, and your acquaintance with the principles of all law, will discover how impossible it is to satisfy the demands of a broken law by future obedience, even supposing that obedience to be perfect, because this makes no atonement for the past.

Penitence alone is no justification. If it were, the pillow of many a criminal would be bathed in tears. How then is man to be justified in the sight of God?

To this question let me direct your attention, before we attempt to analyze those exercises of heart, which are made conditions of salvation.

* Rev. xxi, 27. † Heb. xii, 23.

Let me take you by the hand, and lead you into the way which Christ has consecrated, that at the foot of Calvary you may learn how God can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

* Rom. iii, 26.

CHAPTER V.

THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

When it was discovered that Dr. Dodd, a man celebrated for his learning and piety, had been guilty of the crime of forgery, and the law of England had laid its iron hand upon him, the names of thirty thousand British subjects were appended to a petition for his pardon, the eloquence and influence of Johnson were enlisted in his behalf, his virtuous life was plead as an extenuation; but all these exertions were unavailing, and he perished upon the scaffold. Such is the consequence of transgressing a single law of human enactment.

The great obstacle in the way of the salvation of man, is the inflexible demand of a law, which, though declared to be just and wise, at the same time consigns every transgressor to death. It is therefore evident, that were there no special interposition on the part of God to save mankind, or no expedient by which the majesty of the law might be sustained, neither penitence, or subsequent obedience on the part of an offender, could save him from its curse.

If he were made sensible of the corruption of his nature, he would be left to search in vain for a way of purification; or, though regenerated in heart, his condition would only become more miserable, because, with all his holy aspirations, he could discover nothing before him but eternal separation from God.

But the gospel plan of recovery opens to man a door of salvation. It lifts the veil which enshrouds his soul, and permits him to gaze away to an immortal destiny. Having pointed his benighted feet to the path which "leads to happiness and God," his ears are continually saluted with the invitations of its messages. This is the way, walk ye in it.*

In order to perceive the wisdom and beauty of this system, it will be necessary to advert briefly to the nature of the divine law. This may be regarded in three distinct aspects.

1. As a rule of life, designed to secure the happiness and moral elevation of the universe.

This feature is so obvious that it needs no comment. Its obedience is what constitutes the happiness of heaven, and its disregard the misery of our earth. We perceive then, why its transgression hurled the rebel angels with swift destruction from the battlements of heaven, into outer darkness, where they are said to be reserved in chains of darkness unto judgment.†

* Isaiah xxx, 31. † 2 Pet. ii, 4.

2. It may be regarded as a bulwark of the eternal throne, by which God secures himself in his position, as supreme governor over the universe. "As the whole authority of God is embodied in the *penalty* of the law, by destroying this, his authority as an independent moral governor is destroyed, and there is no government left. This would be in effect making the penalty of the law bend to the case of the transgressor; the consequences of which would be more tremendous than the destruction of this entire system. God would sooner crush a thousand worlds to atoms, or wrap their inhabitants in living flames, than suffer the stability of his throne to be shaken."*

3. We may view it also as an index of the Divine character, by which its justice and holiness are revealed to man; therefore God's nature must change before he can pardon transgressors without first manifesting in some way, his abhorrence of sin.

This brief reference to the great principles involved in the law of God, shows us that it would be destructive to the harmony of heaven, subversive of all government, and a false representation of the Divine mind, if he were to pardon sin without at the same time sustaining his law.

These considerations will also show us why it is that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.† All men are sinners, and the law

* Mat. v, 18. † Rom. iii, 20.

makes no provision for salvation, save by perfect obedience. If this be withheld, it points to no alternative but the execution of its penalty.

"The creature's own effort cannot change his relations to law; and even angels, if they were to embark in his favor, could render him no essential service. This work transcends all *created* power. The law must go on and inflict that death which it threatens, unless God himself provide a remedy. No being can do this but the author of the law, and no expedient can furnish a remedy, except one which shall answer the same purpose as the execution of its penal threatening.

"This expedient, or provision, is found in the Atonement made by Christ. It is by the Atonement that the condition of man is made to differ from the condition of devils. While the latter are given up to the punitive operations of law, the former are placed under a dispensation of mercy, through the atoning blood of Christ. It is the gospel and not the law, that opens the door of hope and life and peace to man.

"For this distinction we are indebted to the sovereign goodness of God. It was his law that demanded blood—it was his tender mercy that looked down from heaven with a strong purpose to save, and it was his wisdom, infinite in its own resources, that contrived a way in which the honor of the law could be supported, and his grace restore and save

the sinner. For this wonderful plan and its blessed results in our world, we should lift up our loud and joyous songs to him who was slain for us, and has redeemed us to God by his blood."*

The fact that an atonement has been made, which meets all these important ends in such a manner that mankind can be justified without the deeds of the law,† is a prominent feature in every evangelical system of doctrine; for it is expressly declared that by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.‡ But while salvation is held to be an act of grace and not of justice, the law is still considered as binding in all its force as a rule of life; and an instrument of salvation, by becoming our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ‖— for, by the law is the knowledge of sin.§ When the transgressor, by the operation of this perfect rule, is made sensible of his moral dissimilitude to God, and the vileness of his character, he is prepared to appreciate the sublimity of the gospel plan of salvation. It is here that he perceives how the demands of the law have been met and its majesty sustained, by One who has suffered to redeem us from its curse.¶ But the efficacy of the whole scheme rests in the fact, that this Being is equal in every respect to the work necessary to be done. This is the corner-stone** of the whole superstruc-

* Rev. v, 9. † Rom. iii, 28. ‡ Rom. iii, 20. ‖ Gal. iii, 24. § Rom. iii, 20. ¶ Gal. iii, 13. ** Eph. ii, 20,

ture; for if Christ be not divine, then is our faith vain, and all those bright hopes radiating from the cross, deceitful.

The very nature of an atonement for sin implies three things:

1. That its author should be equal in power with the author of the law; for what created being could come between its penalty and the sinner, without being crushed himself beneath the load. If a man were to interpose between a debtor and his creditor, by assuming his liability, and then should be unable to satisfy the debt, the only effect of this would be to involve himself in the same ruin.

2. It is also apparent, that a being who undertakes an atonement, by the effect of which the penalty of the law is to be arrested, must be equal in wisdom with the author of the law; else its influence will be to detract from the dignity of the law: therefore it must be of such a nature as to produce the same moral effect as the execution of the penalty would do.

The case of the king of the Locrians, so often cited, will illustrate this point. He had enacted a law punishing adultery with the loss of sight. When his own son was a transgressor, rather than consign him to utter blindness, the father caused one of his eyes to be put out, and suffered the loss of one of his own.

Here, though the penalty of the law was set aside

in part, yet the expedient was of such a nature as to secure all the moral effect, and perhaps more, than if the son had heen punished according to the letter of the law.

3. Sin being an evil infinite in its nature, nothing less than an infinite sacrifice could suitably manifest God's abhorrence of it.

When the sons of Brutus had conspired with the Tuscan ambassador against the State, they were tried and condemned by their father, and he attended their execution. Though we may consider his conduct as unnatural, we cannot fail to perceive that it exhibits in the clearest manner his abhorrence of their crime, and would impress every mind with a conviction, that if he spared not his own sons, no other criminal of a similar character need hope for mercy by the law, while its execution was vested in such hands.

For these reasons, and others of a similar nature, it became necessary that an Atoning Sacrifice should be of such a character as to answer these important ends. He should be able to sustain the penalty of the law — of such dignity as to produce the same moral effect as the literal execution of its penalty, and equally manifest God's abhorrence of sin, and determination to punish.

With these positions, which present themselves upon the very surface of the subject, as the dictates of reason and sound policy, the Bible doctrine ex-

actly corresponds when it teaches, that we are redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

Accordingly, we find that from the first terrible night of guilt and woe, when darkness gathered upon the souls of the guilty pair, driven forth as wanderers and outcasts, a ray of hope emanating from Calvary, penetrated the gloom of ages, and lightened up the path of reconciliation.

Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.† Yet it is one of the most delightful, as well as one of the sublimest truths of religion, that such an atonement has been made as will sustain the dignity of God, while it saves from perdition all who comply with its conditions.

In such a sacrifice as this, we behold the claims of public justice satisfied, by amends to a broken law more ample than the death of the whole creation of intelligent beings.

When heaven witnessed the incarnation and death of its King, it was made apparent that the claims of justice were not to be set aside, and the law become a dead letter. There was also evidence that God had not abated any of his detestation of sin; for this was a manifestation of his utter abhorrence more appalling than if the law had been permitted

* I Pet. i, 18,19. †4 Tim. iii, 16.

to take its course. When the incarnate God cried in agony, If possible, let this cup pass from me;* then, if ever, the unbending justice of God would have yielded to the claims of mercy. By this wonderful scheme all the ends of public justice were met—the authority of God established—his character exhibited with additional lustre, and a way provided by which he might rescue the race of man from impending ruin.

Here is a place where mercy and truth have met together—righteousness and peace have kissed each other.† Around the cross of Christ, all the attributes of the Divine Nature cluster and beam forth with resplendent brightness, radiating upon that new and living way consecrated through the veil.

But it becomes necessary to arrest this train of thought, that a few arguments may be presented in this connexion, sustaining the position which has been assumed for a present purpose.

We have already perceived from the nature of an atonement, that the idea of itself embraces also the idea of a divine sacrifice. Let us then examine the evidence upon this point, that we may in the outset determine whether Christ, who claims this relation to the human family, is qualified from his nature, to meet the exalted demands of God's law. From the nature of the case, a mistake here must

* Mat. xxix, 39. † Ps. lxxxv, 10.

be fatal to the soul. If faith in his mediatorship be necessary as a ground of pardon, this evidently cannot be exercised while the question remains unsettled in the mind whether he possesses any proper claims to divine honors, or not.

CHAPTER VI.

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.

ASIDE from those reasons already given, the doctrine of a Divine Mediator is sustained by Bible arguments alone. As these can be easily collated by any one conversant with the Scriptures, nothing more will be attempted here, than to present a few of the heads under which proof texts should be arranged, with a passage or two subjoined as a sample of the kind of evidence with which the Word of God abounds.

The restricted limits necessarily assigned to this subject, will admit of nothing more than a few obvious reasons for holding that Jesus Christ is verily "God manifest in the flesh;"* and these will be presented more for the sake of obtaining a secure resting place to the soul really anxious to find salvation, than to convince the skeptical.

1. Prophets and inspired teachers ascribe to him the titles and attributes of God.

Jeremiah, predicting the mediatorial work of

*1 Tim. iii, 16.

Christ, says of its author, His name shall be called Jehovah, our righteousness.* This term always applies to the Divine Essence, and not to a person or attribute of the Deity. Isaiah declares more particularly, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.†

In the Hebrew language, *to be called* and *to be*, often mean the same thing; therefore, in these instances, when it is asserted that he shall be called by these names, it is exactly equivalent to saying that *he is* Jehovah, &c.

Through the influence of these and numerous other prophecies, the Jewish nation, who could not devise those quibbles which ignorance of their language has begotten in modern times, believed that the Messiah, whenever he appeared, would be no less than God manifest in the flesh.

2. The writings of evangelists and apostles, declare him to be identical with the Father.

John commences his narrative by announcing this as a fundamental truth.

In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God.‡

In this short sentence the divinity of Christ is

* Jer. xxiii, 6. † Is. ix, 6. ‡ John i, 1.

asserted in three different forms; first, that he existed from eternity; second, that he created all things; and third, he declares unequivocally that he was God. That there may be no mistake as to the person of whom he is speaking, he adds, And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us.* Again, There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Logos, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are *one*.†

Paul is equally explicit in his assertions of the same truth. When he says, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.‡ In whom we have redemption through his blood. * * * All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ‖

Creation is evidently the work of Almightiness; therefore, if Christ be the creator of all things, he must be self-existent and eternal.

Another attribute of the Deity is Immutability. And Paul says of Christ, that he is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.§

These are only a meagre selection of the texts of Scripture, which directly or by inevitable implication, sustain the important doctrine under discussion. They are taken from all the different classes

* John i, 14. † 1 John, v, 7, ‡ 1 Tim. iii, 16 ‖ Col. i, 14–17. § Heb. xiii, 8.

of writers, prophets, evangelists, and apostles, showing that one sentiment pervades the whole.

These teach us at least what their opinions were upon this subject; and if we may not rely upon them as safe guides to the truth, in relation to those subjects of which they treat, and to unfold which God bestowed upon them peculiar spiritual discernment, then indeed they are *not* a light to our path,* to guide us to heaven, but the ravings of distempered minds, misleading us to our ruin.

This doctrine is further sustained by the fact, that Christ performed the works of God by his own power and authority. This will be apparent, if we notice briefly the difference between his manner and that of the apostles. Theirs was a delegated authority, and as subordinate agents it became them to acknowledge the source of their power. We may reasonably conclude, that the moment they ceased to ascribe honor to Him from whom they received their ability, that power would have been withheld. So in the case of Christ. Had he been only a higher order of created being, we cannot suppose it consistent with Divine benevolence, to have permitted him to *publish to the world a lie, and then substantiate it by miracles.* Peter, fixing his eyes upon the lame man, said, In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I say unto thee arise and walk.†

* Ps. cxix, 105. † Acts iii, 6.

But Christ said to the man with the withered hand, Stretch forth thy hand.* He stood by the tomb of Lazarus, and cried, Lazarus come forth,† and the dead man arose and came forth, clad in the habiliments of the grave. When they brought unto him one sick of the palsy, he said, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. In view of his exercising such god-like authority, the Jews inquired, Who can forgive sins but God only? But he settled the question by replying, That ye may know that the Son of man hath power to forgive sins, *I say* unto thee arise.‡ These incidents are sufficient to show the difference between the exercise of a delegated power, and one that belonged to the agent himself.

Christ not only performed miracles in his own name, but received worship as God.

Numerous instances are recorded, where divine homage was received by him without rebuke, as in the case of the leper cleansed, the ruler whose daughter had been restored, the woman of Canaan, and his own disciples.‖

Contrast this with the conduct of Peter, who, when Cornelius fell down and worshipped him, commanded him to stand up, for he says, I myself am a man.§ And upon another occasion, when the multitude would have ascribed divine honors to the apostles, they were filled with distress, fearing that

*Mat. xii, 13. †John xi, 14. ‡Mat. ix, 6. ‖Mat. viii, 2; ix, 18; xv, 25; xxviii, 9,17. §Acts x, 25.

the minds of the people might be misled.* Can we suppose that the highest angel would have been permitted to prove to the world his divine commission by the power of working miracles—to assert that he was identical with God†—to arrogate the title and power of Jehovah—to receive that worship which is due to no created being, and thus mislead and ruin a world which he was commissioned to save?

It seems as though the very heavens, instead of recognizing his divinity,‡ would have proclaimed him a traitor to God in accents of thunder.

The public teachings of Christ, as we should expect, exhibit a striking contrast to the absurd and metaphysical speculations of philosophers, who thought their philosophy degraded by supposing it to have any practical bearing on the life; and to the cold and formal teachings of the doctors of Jewish law, who looked no farther than to the observance of fasts and festivals, and the tithing of mint and anise and cummin. In the teachings of Christ, the tremendous considerations of eternity were presented, a day of judgment was declared, the nature and felicity of heaven unfolded, the horrors of hell revealed by figures and language in keeping with the sublimity of the subjects.

Heaven, earth, and hell, were summoned to

* Acts xiv, 15. † John x, 30. ‡ Mat. iii, 17; xvii, 5.

maintain the attributes of God, and they each gave forth their voice, thundering down from the throne of Omnipotence, and echoing through eternity, with a power which shook the sinner's frame with terror, so that his enemies confessed that never *man* spake like this man.*

Many have stumbled at this doctrine, because it surpasses their comprehension; but if it did not possess this feature, it would be entirely unworthy our belief.

It is not to be supposed that an exhibition of God's mercy would be less wonderful than that of his other attributes. His justice might be written in flaming characters upon those dark wreaths which roll up eternally from the bottomless pit;† but the extent of his mercy could be manifested only by saving the guilty. If a sacrifice less than this would have secured the same result, God would have accepted it. But, from the nature of the case, this was impossible.

How absurd for us to expect to understand the operations of the Infinite Mind, in the workings of his moral system, when we cannot comprehend a single attribute in his nature, or fathom a single work in his creation.

Can we understand his omniscience, his eternity, or his creative power? Can we follow him in his lowest works, without meeting with things as truly

* John vii, 46. † Rev. xiv, 9.

beyond our comprehension as this? The most insignificant insect that flutters in the air, the minutest flower which unfolds its petals to the morning sun, and the formation of the pearly dew drop that hangs trembling on its leaf, are all beyond our comprehension. We are surrounded with mysteries. Ourselves, all animated nature, the wide spread heavens, the revolving earth, the rolling spheres, all transcend our comprehension; yet we do not doubt their existence.

So long, then, as the simplest things in nature are involved in unfathomed mystery, how absurd to reject this crowning work of God, in the redemption of man, because we cannot understand it!

It was not human, but divine love that originated the plan,—not human, but divine wisdom that executed it—for herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.*

"O! for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."

You perceive, then, on what a sure foundation the hopes of the christian rest;—not upon legal obedience, nor upon self-righteousness, but upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,—Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.†

* 1 John iv, 10. † Eph. ii, 20; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

CHAPTER VII.

SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL MANKIND.

If Christ be God, then his death was an infinite sacrifice; and if by this sacrifice an atonement has been made for sin, it follows that an *unlimited* number of finite beings may receive its benefits without impairing its efficacy; any more than a definite number of feet and inches can cover infinite space.

By this, abundant provision has been made for the salvation of the human family; and the invitations of the gospel to receive the heavenly gift, are made in perfect sincerity on the part of God. All that is necessary to obtain pardon and favor, is a compliance with the terms in which they are offered.

"If the amends actually made are such that God could consistently forgive one sinner, he might with equal consistency forgive any number, unless prevented by some other reason. The Atonement, in other words, which was necessary for a world, was equally necessary, and in just the same manner and degree, for an individual sinner."*

* Dwight's Theology, sermon 56.

This subject is succinctly but clearly discussed by Paul, when he represents the Atonement of Christ as co-extensive with the ruin of the fall: for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. * * * That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

This parallel between the destruction entailed by Adam, and the salvation provided by Christ, implies that one is equal with the other, or it is destitute of force. In another place reference is made to the same idea by a similar mode of expression. Because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead.† Two things are here implied, one of which will be more exactly expressed by reversing the sentence, then it will read, If *all* mankind were dead, then Christ died *for all*. But the Savior, in the invitations and commands of the gospel, seems to settle this question beyond controversy; for every promise and threatening which it contains, must be predicated upon the fact that Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man.‡

If there be no provision for all who are hungry and famishing, why has Infinite Benevolence tantalized them, by invitations to come and be fed at the banquet,‖ and refreshed at the fountain of living

* Rom. v. † 1 Cor. v, 14. ‡ Heb. ii, 9. ‖ Mat. xxii, 1–11.

waters?* If there be no door of salvation opened, why are we commanded to flee from the wrath to come?† And if there is no guilt in neglecting this great salvation, why threatened with lying under the abiding wrath of God for not believing?‡ Surely it is because there is balm in Gilead and a physician there, that all are invited to apply and be healed.‖

This subject is most beautifully illustrated by Christ, where he says, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.§

The force of this illustration cannot be perceived, unless we permit the imagination to picture the scene from which it is taken.¶ Let us then attempt to represent to the mind, those circumstances under which this striking symbol of the lifting up of Christ was introduced, and then by analogy, the separate features of the subject may be delineated.

When God, to punish the Israelites, had sent this dreadful scourge of serpents among them, we may suppose that their camp was immediately filled with wailing and death. Multitudes, bloated and blackened by the poison of the venomous reptiles, were writhing in the agony of death. Others, smarting under a more recent sting, sat disconsolate, watching

* John iv, 14: vii, 37; x, 9. † Mat. iii, 7. ‡ John iii, 36. ‖ Jer. viii, 12; Mat. ix, 12. § John iii, 14,15. ¶ Num. xxi, 6–9.

the spread of that virus which was polluting the fountain of life and spreading disorganization over the frame, while on every side were lying the grim and distorted carcasses of those who had fallen victims to the destroyer.

In the midst of this scene of wretchedness and despair, Moses, by divine command, erected a brazen serpent, and sent forth a herald to proclaim that a remedy was provided.

How electric must have been the effect of this joyful message! The sufferers, smarting under a recent sting, rush with all the eagerness of hope to obtain a sight of the wonderful spectacle. Those whose case has become desperate, drag themselves with slow and painful effort to the door of the tent, and gaze with delight. The wife supports the head of her dying husband — turns his glassy eyes towards the life-renewing object, and cries in his deafened ear, "Look, and live!" and, as he looks, the sting of the viper ceases its smart, the swollen limb subsides, the eye resumes its lustre, and all is well.

This is the figure employed by the Savior to represent the influence of his atoning sacrifice upon the human race; therefore, it presents a happy illustration by which the several features of the scheme may be exhibited. The Bible represents the human race as envenomed by sin; and by its deadly influence upon the moral constitution, mil-

lions have sunk down to eternal death. But the provisions of the gospel extend to those upon the brink of ruin; and they are invited to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of *the world*.* Moses required faith in the efficacy of the remedy in a sufficient degree to induce a trial. Jesus Christ demands the exercise of the same degree of faith, as a condition of salvation.

Those who had sufficient faith to look upon the serpent lived, irrespective of their age or condition.

Those who look by faith to Christ for salvation will be saved. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.†

The serpent was erected that *all who were bitten* might be healed. The Atonement of Christ is coextensive with the ravages of sin.

If any refused to look to the serpent, but attempted other remedies, they must have perished miserably.

Those who refuse to believe in Christ will not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them.‡

Having consecrated this way at such an infinite cost, he cannot save in any other without proclaiming by that act, that all this display of means for our recovery is unnecessary,—the wisdom of man superior to that of God, and the thrilling scene on Calvary a solemn farce. For these reasons he has

* John i, 29. † Is. xlv, 22. ‡ John iii, 36.

declared most unequivocally, that There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Under the old dispensation, this event was showed forth by sacrifices, and other striking emblems. Prophets, in raptured vision, foretold the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Poets sung of his triumphs, glorious resurrection, and a world redeemed and saved by the opening of this new and living way. That man may not mistake the path, heaven is shedding its brightest radiance upon it; celestial gates are unfolded at its end; and angel voices sweep in silver tones over its course, crying "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Such is the perversion of the human mind, that when it perceives no limit to the mercy of God, in the provision which he has made for the salvation of man, many flatter themselves that they will be saved without respect to their character, and independent of those conditions upon which salvation is offered. This is an error which has misled more souls than open infidelity; because, while the intellect revolts at the gross absurdities of the latter, it may be seduced by the speciousness of the former. The Atonement cannot be regarded in any other view than as an expedient, by which it is made possible for God to pardon and receive into

* Acts iv, 12.

favor, those who are proper subjects of divine clemency, without a gross perversion of reason and scripture. Were it not for this provision on the part of God, none of the human race could be justified in his sight. Therefore, while it saves the humble penitent, it adds a hundred fold to the guilt of those who reject Christ.

No cities were cursed like Jerusalem,* Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum,† to whom salvation had been offered. The punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah, who for their iniquities had been swept from the earth by a special judgment, will be insignificant compared with theirs. So it must be with all, who, possessing the knowledge of what Infinite Benevolence has done to open a door of reconciliation, will not enter and be saved. As their position among the favored of God, is more exalted than that of others, their fall will be greater and their destruction more terrible.

There are no limits to the mercy of God, and no obstacles in the way of salvation, save those which exist in the wicked and unbelieving heart of man. And the *conditions* of salvation are only such as the nature of the case demands: penitence for sin, distrust of every other way, and full reliance upon Christ, as a ground of justification. These, as will be presently shown, are indispensable; because it

* Luke xxi, 20–25. † Mat. xi, 20–24.

would be inconsistent in God, and subversive of every principle of justice, to pardon the sinner without them.

Hitherto, our attention has been directed principally to the theoretical part of the subject of this treatise. This has been done with a view of winning the mind to the side of truth, that the heart might be impressed, as God intended, by the force of that truth presented to the mind. We are now approaching the point where it will become necessary to analyze those exercises of heart which are made indispensable conditions of salvation. But it may be that while the mind of the reader has been engaged in contemplating the beauties of this consecrated way, some heavenly influence has come over his heart, and "a still small voice" has been heard, pouring its expostulations in the ear.

It is sometimes the case that when the mind has been vascilating and is almost determined upon entering this way, its resolution is unhappily shaken by another kind of influence. Many who readily admit, as a general proposition, that God is willing to pardon sin, imagine that the promises of the gospel cannot apply to them, because their case is of a *peculiar* nature; they have sinned so long, or their sins have been of such a singular character, and committed under such aggravating circumstances,

that it would be presumption for them to hope in the mercy of God. If this difficulty has been presented to the mind, permit me to inquire, for whom you suppose this provision was made? Was it for those holy beings who preserved their integrity when Satan spread sedition through the ranks of the heavenly host? Or for man, retaining the Divine image in which he was created? Such beings as these need no atonement. Was it for those whom God has already consigned to perdition, and given up to the operations of his punitive justice? These are now beyond the reach of his mercy; and no way of reconciliation is needed for them. Was it for man, insensible of his wickedness, and seeking heaven by works of merit, and claiming it as a right? It would be an insult to offer such an one salvation by grace, and God would sooner vacate his throne than do it. Then it is to the convicted penitent, destitute of righteousness, and sinking beneath his load of guilt, that the bleeding hand is stretched out to save.

It is for the encouragement of such, that Christ has declared that the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. * * * I came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance;* and through him the mercy of God can now be extended even to the chief of sinners.†

* Mat. ix, 12. † 1 Tim. i, 15.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

Suppose a man, who had been bereft of reason, until in his madness, he had covered himself with rags and filth, were to be suddenly restored, and then presented before a mirror. Such a view as he would there obtain, would doubtless fill his mind with melancholy reflections. If we can imagine his feelings, as he views his fantastic decorations, his matted beard, disheveled locks, and haggard countenance, they will give some idea of the first impressions of the sinner under conviction. His moral pollution is represented by the physical condition of the insane man. The law of God is the mirror in which he beholds his depravity. During the existence of the delusion, we may suppose that the maniac, imagining himself a hero, or a prince, had pleased his distempered fancy with these ridiculous ornaments, but by a single glance, he is stricken down under a sense of shame and self-loathing.

So it is with the sinner: when he obtains a proper

view of his own character, he perceives that all his righteousness is as filthy rags,* and that he is a miserable offender against God.

Conviction of sin, is that exercise of the soul in which the creature is convinced that the whole tenor of his life has been wrong, his conduct, his influence and example, have not been such as to honor God, and answer the noble purpose for which he was created. It results directly from a just perception of the character and law of God, embracing also a sense of *personal* guilt, in having rebelled against the authority of one so holy, and transgressed a law so wise and just.

As the physically blind are insensible to the beauties of the summer landscape, or the sublimities of the natural world, so the spiritually blind are insensible of the glories and sublimities of the Divine nature and government. The natural man regards God more as an inexorable and arbitrary sovereign, than as the Lord, merciful and gracious. His law is felt to be unnecessarily severe,† and its penalty not proportionate with the crime of man. Now, it must be apparent to every mind, that before the soul can be renewed and qualified for heaven, it must perceive these things in their true light;— God as a holy and righteous sovereign, and his law as the production of Infinite wisdom and goodness:

* Is. lxiv, 6. † Rom. viii, 7.

for he will not permit treason and treachery in his heavenly kingdom. When these things are properly apprehended by the mind, conviction of sin is the immediate consequence.

The nature of this exercise is still more beautifully represented in the parable of the prodigal son, where he is described as *coming to himself*,* and perceiving, as he had never done before, the wisdom of that government under which he had been so restless.

Something of the same feeling was expressed by Isaiah, when he obtained a new and overpowering view of the holiness and majesty of God, he exclaimed, Wo is me! for I am a man of unclean lips.† And by Job, when he said, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes seeth thee: wherefore I *abhor myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.‡ So it is in every case of conviction: no sooner is the eye of the understanding opened to behold wondrous things out of the law,‖ than conviction is an immediate result.

This exercise is not merely a conviction of intellect, or an assent of the understanding to the doctrine of depravity in the human race, but it is a deep and abiding sense of moral delinquency, or personal demerit, so pungent as to deprive the soul of happiness, until it has found it by believing in Christ.

* Luke xv, 17. † Is. vi, 5. ‡ Job xlii, 5,6. ‖ Ps. cxix, 18.

Thus the law produces that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation.*

Neither is it a transient impression, remaining a few hours or a few days, and then passing away forever. But if properly acted upon, this view of the character, government and law of God, remains through life and through eternity. Whenever, through human weakness, or the seductions of satan, the soul is led astray, it immediately feels that self-condemnation which leads it, like David, to cry, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.†

It appears, then, that this exercise has not its foundation in an arbitrary command, but is one which grows out of the necessity of the case; for until the soul has obtained this view of God and itself, it is not prepared to enter into that living way, consecrated through the veil. Neither is it *necessarily* a protracted state of mental horror, or of mysterious gloom—a sort of valley and shadow of death—through which it must grope in darkness and despair; but it is a rational exercise, caused by a clear apprehension of truth, and of the consequence of coming under the condemnation of God's law.

It is not uncommon for the inquiring mind to grope in darkness here, striving by the working of its own imagination, to *create* a state of desponden-

* 2 Cor. vii, 10; Gal. iii. 24. † Ps. li, 10.

cy, vainly imagining this to be a work of *merit*, by which the favor of God will be secured.

This should be regarded as the last stratagem of the devil to keep the soul away from Christ. So long as the convicted sinner is flattering himself that this is a holy exercise which ought to be cherished, and is estimating his case by the strength of his convictions, supposing that the more he gives himself up to despair, the more God will be disposed to pardon, he is in a hopeless state; for no exercise of heart can be more opposite to that of saving faith, than this. Whatever may have been the degree of guilt which the soul incurred by rejecting Christ, while in a state of moral blindness, that guilt is enhanced rather than diminished by continuing in that condition, after this view of its true situation is obtained.

The moment the soul is convicted to such a degree, as to feel that it would be an act of justice in God to leave it to eat of the fruit of its own ways, it is convicted sufficiently to love and reverence the character of God. And one such perception of its relations to him, will awaken the conscience in such a manner, that it will sustain the decisions of the judgment day. It is a strange delusion, to suppose that continuance in disobedience and rebellion, will propitiate the favor of God.

This point may be very well illustrated, by referring again to the condition of those who had

been bitten by the fiery serpents. Let us suppose that one of these Israelites, in the last stages of disease, induced by the bite of a reptile, were to cry in his agony, "What shall I do to be saved?" Moses, in compassion, approaches him and says, "Look to the remedy which God in compassion has provided for you." Instead of obeying the direction at once, he replies, "See how the disease is spreading itself over my system—soon the venom will reach the fountain of life. Alas! the remedy is not for such a case as mine." "But," says his benefactor, "if you spend the precious moments of life in watching the progress of the disease, and lamenting over your miserable condition, you must inevitably perish: *look to the remedy and not the disease.*" "Ah!" rejoins the dying man, "I am sensible that my condition is wretched indeed, but I do not *feel* enough yet. When I have watched the progress of the disease a little longer, and have obtained a more vivid impression of my danger, then I will try the remedy." Who would not say, in such a case as this, that the moment the unfortunate man *felt the sting*, he should have looked to the remedy?

This represents in some degree, the situation of the convicted sinner. If he cherishes these feelings with the expectation of finding salvation here, he will perish in his sins; for he has mistaken the path. This is not the way of salvation, but the road to despair. The moment he becomes sensible of his

condition, he should look to Christ as the remedy which God has provided; for be it remembered, that it is not the *degree* of conviction experienced which secures the favor of God, but the OBEDIENCE that it produces. There is another important fact which should be understood in connection with this subject. It is, that the strength of these emotions will be modified by temperament and education.

Many people who are really anxious seekers of religion—from reading cases of remarkable conversion, and sometimes, alas! from improper instruction received from the pulpit—imagine that every case of regeneration is attended with the most powerful emotions, and sudden revulsions from despair to ecstacy.

This subject will be more fully noticed in its proper place; but it is necessary to remark here, that these should be considered as exceptions rather than the general rule. A large majority of the most consistent christians never have felt them in any such degree, as the inquirer sometimes imagines he must, before he can begin to hope. If we take into consideration the variety of temperaments, and the different degrees of excitability in the human system, we cannot expect that the same influences will produce exactly similar results. One can view with fortitude the death of his dearest friend, while another is overpowered by a similar bereavement. And this difference of temperament will so effectu-

ally modify the feelings, even when conviction is genuine, that it will be in vain for all to expect these overwhelming emotions, even if they were desirable. If they wait for them, they will wait until the day of hope and mercy is forever past.

Education is another circumstance, which will essentially modify this exercise. There are many, living in christian lands, who have very little knowledge of their true position in the sight of God; therefore, when the truth, stern and startling, breaks upon the mind, it cannot fail to move the deep spring of emotion in the heart: for it is like awakening from a peaceful slumber, to find one's self enveloped in the flames of a consuming dwelling. But others are taught from infancy that they are sinners, and the intellect has perceived this truth just as it does any other proposition sustained by evidence. In such cases, a certain degree of conviction always attends an exhibition of the truth. No new discovery is made to the mind by its instrumentality—only a clearer apprehension produced of that which has been long admitted. In such a case the soul needs to *act* upon convictions already present, rather than seek for something which cannot be experienced.

Generally, the grand difficulty lies not in the want of suitable convictions, but in the fact that they are driven from the mind as unwelcome intruders upon its peace. It is too often like a man

beholding his face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* It need hardly be added, that such conduct uniformly results in greater hardness of heart.

* James i, 24.

CHAPTER IX.

REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

True penitence always possesses three characteristics, by which it may be distinguished from other exercises of heart, with which it is often confounded. These are, sorrow for sin — abandonment of sin, or conversion,* and restitution.

Suppose a man to be convicted of a high crime against the state, and suffering the consequence of his transgression in the penitentiary; and in view of his apparent sorrow, and the sincerity of his repentance, he is released from confinement by the exercise of the executive clemency; but no sooner is his object attained, than he immediately resumes his former course of crime and wickedness. In such a case, would not the result warrant the belief, that his sorrow was created by the *consequence*, and not from a detestation of the crime itself?

Judas was filled with *remorse* when he saw the

* Conversion is frequently used as synonymous with Regeneration; but it is in fact a subordinate part of repentance, as the term literally implies — turning from; and in this sense it will be used in the succeeding pages.

consequence of his treacherous conduct; but it was not godly sorrow, or true repentance, because he immediately added another to the catalogue of his crimes, instead of reforming his life. Wicked men, (and perhaps devils,) are frequently filled with distress as they are suffering the consequence of their wickedness; but theirs is not genuine repentance, because they do not turn from their wicked courses. No illustration of this subject can compare with that of the prodigal son, already referred to. He was convicted when he is represented as coming to himself, but exhibited the feelings of a true penitent, when he resolved to *go home*, or abandon his wicked life, and with confession of his fault, to say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.*

Penitence, then, is sorrow for sin, not merely because of its consequence, but because it is detestable in its nature, as opposed to God, to holiness, and to happiness—and the evidence of this state of feeling is its abandonment. That this important point may be placed distinctly before the mind, let us recur to the case of the convict, and suppose him to petition the governor for pardon, but to the petition he affixes an appendant, stating his determination to take signal vengeance upon all who were instrumental in his conviction. Would any friend of society subscribe such a petition as this? Every one is sufficiently acquainted

* Luke xv, 18.

with the claims of public justice, to know that such a man is not a proper subject of executive clemency. Before he is entitled to be heard with favor, he must exhibit such detestation of his crime, that the law and its executors will be respected, even while they punish him, and give such *evidence* of penitence, as to warrant at least the presumption, that in his subsequent life he will sustain both the law and its officers. Mankind of course may be deceived, and by mistaking for true penitence that which is artfully assumed, the ends of justice may be defeated. But he who searches the heart,* will not pardon, until he beholds a degree of penitence sufficient to lead the transgressor unconditionally to renounce sin.

Inattention to this evident truth, has produced many fatal mistakes. It frequently happens that the sinner is not willing, fully, immediately, unconditionally, and openly, to renounce sin, until he can obtain some assurance that he is actually forgiven; when, from the nature of the case, he cannot be pardoned until this indispensable pre-requisite is performed on his part. How absurd to expect that God will afford the soul evidence of the forgiveness of its sins, when they are not forgiven, and will not be remitted, until fully and unconditionally renounced. Must not the rebel ground the weapons of his warfare, and submit unconditionally, before

* Jer. xvii, 10.

his sovereign can hear his plea? But the sinner attempts to make conditions with God, who has declared that he will make no conditions with rebels, and pardons only upon an unqualified surrender of themselves into his hands. If he were to pursue a different course, and pardon the sinner before he has thus surrendered himself, he would violate all our notions of justice, and bring his own authority into contempt, instead of sustaining the dignity of his character as sovereign of the universe.

The seeker after religion must pursue a course similar to that of Cæsar, when he invaded Great Britain, and ordered all his transports to be drawn upon the strand and burned in the sight of his army. By cutting off all hope of retreat, he signified that the only alternative before them was victory or death. So the repenting sinner should cut off his retreat to sin, by some *decisive* act of his own, and girding on the gospel armor, he should evince his determination to overcome every obstacle. Though the pride of his nature may array itself against this course, and satan may, and doubtless will, suggest the probability of his failure; yet if he have strength to take this first step, he has overcome the greatest difficulty in his way, and the grace of God will be sufficient for him* to accomplish the rest.

It is to be feared, that many souls have been lost

* 2 Cor. xii, 9.

by resting upon good resolutions merely, without carrying them into effect. When the conscience is aroused, it cannot be quieted with any thing less than a resolution of this kind, accordingly a compromise is made, by a promise that at some future day the subject of religion shall be attended to. But the *convenient* season* never arrives, and the consequence is, that at the threshold of eternity the soul is filled with the agonizing reflection that the precious season for repentance is passed forever.

Suppose that Cæsar had merely *resolved* to conquer Britain, without having acted energetically in carrying his resolution into effect, what practical advantage would he have gained by this? And suppose that the sinner resolves to become a saint, but continues in the practice of sin, and remains in the ranks of God's enemies, what will his good resolution avail him in the end? The reason why so many stop in their heavenward course, and ever after remain fixed in an immovable position, is because they act so differently in religious matters from what they do in those of a secular nature. They promise themselves much; but do nothing. They desire to be kept from sin, and pray earnestly to that effect; but are very careful to do nothing that shall hedge up their retreat. They wish to serve God; but at the same time will not do any thing

* Acts xxiv, 25.

that shall impair their standing as servants of the devil. They make a few feeble attempts to enter into the consecrated way; but at the same time leave the path open, that they may return at any moment to their former course of life. This is the practical inference from the conduct of all those who attempt to obtain religion secretly. There are many, who entertain the opinion that they can pursue this course with God—obtain the brightest evidence of his love—when their conduct indicates that there is no true penitence in the heart, and no conversion from sin to holiness—only a rash *experiment* with God—a weak and puerile attempt to impose upon him by pretended penitence, while the soul is secretly cherishing all its love for sin, and has never determined to abandon it. The true penitent cares not who knows his feelings. His resolution to renounce sin is fully taken, and he determines to forsake it to the extent of his ability, even though he should never obtain evidence of pardon. If he must perish, he is resolved to perish at the footstool of sovereign mercy.

Another characteristic of true penitence is restitution. Suppose an individual to have robbed his neighbor of a large sum of money, and though upon conviction he exhibits great apparent contrition, yet he steadily refuses to restore what he has taken, or to discover where it is secreted. What opinion

would be entertained of this repentance? These things are so plain when applied to the intercourse of man with his fellow man, that a question of this kind seems childish; but it involves a principle which is the source of almost insurmountable difficulties, when applied to our relations with God. He has demanded restitution of the sinner, as an evidence of sincerity, not in silver and gold, it is true, but in those things of which he has been robbed. The transgressor has broken God's law—his influence and example have been against the cause of God; and the only restitution for this injury which he can make, is to give his testimony in favor of the justice of that law which he has broken, and exert what influence he may possess, in behalf of the cause of truth and righteousness. Alas! how many millions have stumbled over this cross, and gone down to hell unpardoned, rather than humble themselves before the world. They will pray to God in secret with so much apparent sincerity, that if he were not omniscient, they would deceive even him. But when this test of their sincerity is applied, they flinch like a man in the hands of a surgeon, when he probes an ill-conditioned ulcer.

As these separate features of true repentance are presented to the mind with more distinctness by illustration, let us suppose the case of a rebel against the authority of his lawful sovereign, who, upon dis-

covering that he is unequal to this contest, goes to him with expressions of penitence upon his lips, and craves his forgiveness. As a preliminary to his restoration to the favor of his prince, he is required to disband his troops, and make a public acknowledgment of the wrong he has done to the government, in disturbing its peace and inciting others to deeds of violence. "Ah!" says the *penitent* man, "you have mistaken my views upon this subject. I perceive that you are the stronger party, and that I am liable to suffer for my disorderly conduct; but I beg you to consider how *humiliating* it will be for me to declare to the world that I have acted wrong, and how it will expose me to the ridicule and contempt of those whom I have misled? I desire to submit to you in *secret*, but openly I must still rank with those who are breaking your laws and denying your authority." What would be the reply of any sovereign, worthy to exercise authority? Would he not say to him, that the world knows that you have rebelled against me, and attempted the overthrow of my government; now they must also be acquainted with your unconditional surrender, or my authority is at an end. The *moral effect* of this is necessary to the peace of my kingdom, and it is essential to me as an *evidence* of your sincerity. The unwillingness you manifest to comply with this preliminary condition, satisfies me that *you fear my*

power more than you love my government. Is not the sovereign right? And why is it not equally right for God to require something of the rebel who has sinned against him, that shall have an influence in *neutralizing* the effect of his wicked conduct and example?

From these familiar illustrations, it is apparent, that God acts upon the same general principles as those which govern our intercourse with each other. When they are so plain in their application to human government, how blind must be that mind, which cannot perceive their reasonableness in the divine administration. Surely, we should concede to the Ruler of the universe, as much wisdom as is requisite for man to sustain the government of a petty kingdom.

It may be perceived, also, that the way of salvation is not a blind and mysterious path; on the contrary, it is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.* An individual has only to adopt those general principles of justice, which his own judgment approves, and he will act upon the very principles which are approved by his Maker.

If this subject has been correctly represented, it follows that true penitence, or repentance unto life, as it is called,† embraces three distinct features—

* Is. xxxv, 8. † Acts xi, 18; 2 Cor. vii, 10.

sorrow for sin, conversion, or turning from sin, and restitution in the only possible way. It is true that the portion of existence which has been passed in rebellion against God, cannot be recalled, and the injury repaired; therefore, in view of this fact, the penitent resolves that the remainder of his days, whether they be many or few, shall be spent in the service of his Redeemer. These features of true repentance, distinguish it from remorse on the one hand, and on the other, from those spasmodic twinges of conscience which sometimes exist, where there has been no true conviction.

It must be apparent to every mind, that God cannot pardon sin and receive the sinner into favor, unless he first experiences this exercise of heart; for every attribute of the divine nature is arrayed against an unconditional pardon. Universal benevolence demands that such conditions should be annexed to the salvation of the soul, and even Mercy cannot save without them; because they are a first and necessary step to the attainment of holiness and its consequent happiness. Holiness must become infinitely desirable before it can be obtained, and sin as its opponent, must become equally detestable. Repentance is too often regarded as an emotion, instead of a principle, which remains in some of its features, through eternity. If the feeling of condemnation which characterizes its first exercise,

passes away, the desire for holiness and detestation of sin which it begets, will remain forever. Many of those who have had abundant means of obtaining religious knowledge, are pleasing themselves with the delusion, that it is a sufficient repentance to cry, "God be merciful unto me, a sinner," at the hour of death, and imagine that because God is declared to be merciful, he will save them at last. But such a God as that, is not the Being who swept the earth by flood, and wiped out the pollutions of Sodom by fire, or opened its horrible jaws to crush a rebellious troop; but the creature of imagination. Doubtless, there were prolonged and dreadful shrieks and cries for mercy, when the heavens poured out their fury upon these; but it was too late, their day of mercy had passed, and God in righteous indignation, was about to take his sword of vengeance into his own hand.*

There is another fatal mistake which demands a passing notice here. It has been already stated that "there are no limits to the mercy of God, and no obstacles in the way of salvation, save those which exist in the wicked and unbelieving heart; and the *conditions* only such as the nature of the case demands."† Repentance is one of those conditions. By making an atonement for sin, Christ has not altered or subverted any of those eternal principles of justice, which sustain the divine government.‡ His

* Deut. xxxii, 41. † See page 75. ‡ See pages 58 and 59.

mediatorial work has only rendered it possible for God to pardon the repenting and believing. This satisfaction made to public justice, enables him to pardon those who place themselves in a condition where pardon can be safely granted; and the whole system stands the same, as when first declared amid the awful sublimities of Sinai. None of the attributes of the divine nature have changed, since he cast out the rebel angels, or drove forth the first human transgressors from his presence. The same cherubim, with the flaming sword, guards the entrance of paradise from all that is unholy or impure, and the same fearful sentence rests upon the transgressor.

Does it follow, because public justice is satisfied, so that mercy may be extended to the penitent, that nothing can be required of individuals as the terms of their pardon? Can they go on in rebellion, setting at defiance the authority of God, and is he bound to pardon them, whether they seek his forgiveness or not? Has this scheme so tied up the hands of Omnipotence, that his creatures may come, even to his judgment seat, and deride his power with impunity? It seems as though the angels, instead of rejoicing, would have remonstrated against such a scheme, as subversive of all law, and annihilating forever those barriers which interpose between them and the malignity of hell.

A correct understanding of this important subject,

will show us a God willing to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin, when sought with penitence; but at the same time, one who will not clear the guilty.* It will also teach us, that men are as deeply interested as angels in maintaining these principles, not merely because they require what is due to God, but because if they were abandoned, he could not afford protection and eternal felicity to a single soul.

For these reasons, repentance occupies a prominent place among those exercises of heart which characterize regeneration, and has ever been insisted upon as an indispensable condition of salvation.†

* Ex. xxxiv, 6,7. † Mat. iii, 2; Luke xiii, 3—xxiv, 47; Acts ii, 38—iii, 19—xx, 21.

CHAPTER X.

FAITH IN A MEDIATOR.

THERE can be no subject of deeper interest to the human heart, than an ivestigation into the nature of that faith, which is the ground of justification: for the reason, that it is made an indispensable condition of salvation, and because its presence fills the soul with holy joy, and imparts to the character the peculiar features of piety. The term faith has been used in such a variety of connexions, that the ideas of many people are extremely vague upon this subject; but a little attention will show that the *nature* of faith is always the same, differing only in degree, or in its object. Faith, in its literal signification, "is the assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting on his authorship and veracity." This kind of faith embraces every thing that is not a matter of experience and personal observation. It relates to all historical truths, and to all philosophical theories.

Religious faith is the same kind of belief in the history and doctrines of Revelation; the nature of the exercise is the same, but restricted to a particu-

lar class of truths. A large majority of those who are educated under the influence of christianity, possess some degree of this faith; but it is not definite enough in its object or sufficiently intense in degree to influence the conduct.

There is still another kind of faith, called "justifying or saving faith," which is the subject of particular examination in the present chapter.

Perhaps the difference between these varieties can be presented in the clearest manner by a simple illustration.

The rays of light that penetrate a window, illuminate sufficiently to enable us to perceive the forms and relations of different objects, but they are too much diffused to produce any effect upon our sensations. But suppose that a few of these are collected by a proper instrument, and concentrated at a single point — though no new quality is imparted to the light — yet the difference in the effect is wonderful.

This illustrates the difference between saving faith and that indefinite and general belief which, though it embraces an assent of the understanding to the great doctrines of the Bible, exerts no sensible influence upon the heart. Saving faith is produced by the concentrated rays of truth directed upon one point, until it burns upon the conscience and kindles into life those holy emotions which characterize the true believer. It is faith *intense* in degree,

and directed towards Christ as its object, "believing him and resting upon him alone for salvation."

This justifying faith is a subject which cannot be illustrated perfectly, by any analogies drawn from civil administrations, because there is nothing analogous to it in the universe.

It is an exercise *sui generis*, a feature in that scheme which stands sublimely alone, unrivalled and unimitated, by any thing in the government of man. When, therefore, we attempt to exhibit the true relation of Christ as mediator between God and man, that we may show how faith in him secures the benefits of this mediation, there is danger of representing the two persons of the Trinity as possessed of different attributes; thus presenting one or the other in a false character. When we view the Son as filled with compassion for our race, we should remember that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

If this fact be retained in the mind, we may represent the nature of faith in a mediator by illustration. The office of mediator implies the existence of two parties, the offended and the offender. It also implies a mutual friend, seeking the good of both, and, from this relation to them, adapted to negotiate between the two. Where the parties are widely

* John iii, 16.

separated, as in the case of God and man, he must partake of the nature of both. A human nature is necessary to adapt him to the wants and capacity of man, and a divine nature to enable him to understand the ends of God's government, and sustain his authority. Therefore, it is said, there is one God and one mediator between God and man; the *man* Christ Jesus,* or "God manifest in the flesh." This is the relation of Christ to the human family as a mediator; seeking on the one hand to sustain the dignity of God, and on the other, to save rebellious man. Referring to the manner in which he now fills the mediatorial office, he is also styled our advocate† and intercessor.‡

In consequence of this undertaking on the part of Christ, the uttermost parts of the earth were given to him for a possession,‖ or in other words, God committed the race of mankind into his hands, and clothed him with authority◊ to pardon or condemn. Being invested with this power, the Son of God offers free salvation to all who repent of sin, and receive him as their advocate and mediator. Now, saving faith implies a belief that all obstacles in the way of a free pardon are removed by the sacrifice of Christ, so that he is both *able* and *willing* to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.¶ It is not merely an intellectual assent

*1 Tim. ii, 5. †1 John ii, 1, ‡Heb. vii, 25. ‖Ps. ii, 8. ◊John v, 27; 1 Pet. iii, 22. ¶Heb. vii, 25.

to the fact, that he has made an atonement for sin, but it is a state of heart, where, from a consciousness of penitence, the soul is able to believe that its own sins are remitted, by the sacrifice, and receives Christ as its mediator, feeling that all is safe.

To exhibit more clearly the nature and necessity of this exercise, let us suppose that a sovereign commissions his son and heir apparent, to negotiate with a rebellious province in his kingdom, and in the written instrument, which he is directed to publish, declares his determination to forgive those whom the son recommends to mercy, and to punish the rest with death. The son, clothed with this power, appears among the rebels, and promises to commend to the favor of the king, all who immediately throw down their weapons and seek his intercession. Now we will suppose a variety of characters to be embraced in the ranks of this rebel host. One class are tired of the unequal contest, and the disorders which their conduct has produced. They hear the proclamation with joy, confess their sins, and have their names enrolled in the book of life. These are such as are saved by faith in the mediator.

But there is another class who reject his offers, for a variety of reasons. One is skeptical in his mind, and doubts his authority to treat with them. Another believes that his professions are insincere, designed only to disarm his enemies, that he may

get them into his power. A third justifies the course he has pursued; therefore needs no interference in his behalf. He is willing to abide the decisions of law in his case, and will not accept a pardon on such humiliating terms. And a fourth, though desiring much to obtain forgiveness, and driven almost to despair by the danger of his situation, is afraid to approach the mediator, because he has been so great a sinner. For these reasons, they all neglect the opportunity for reconciliation, until the day of probation is over, when those whose names are enrolled in the book of life are restored to the favor and confidence of the sovereign, and the rest given into the hands of the executioner.

If this illustration presents any analogy to the mediation of Christ, we perceive how it is, that the faith of an individual will necessarily so influence his conduct, as to lead to a compliance with the terms of pardon. It is faith in the penitent rebel which leads him to apply immediately, and this is the moving cause or the instrument of salvation—thus it becomes "saving faith." So on the other hand, it is destitution of faith which causes the neglect of those who refuse to go to the Mediator, and consequently are left to suffer the consequence of their crime. It is an exercise of the same nature, which, by leading the sinner to Christ, secures the salvation of the soul; and the lack of it, which leaves him to the condemnation of the law.

This illustration also enables us to perceive the *ground* of the believer's justification, which may be briefly stated, thus: God has promised to pardon and save all whom the Son commends to his mercy. The Son has promised to redeem and save those who with penitence and confession of sin, receive him as their mediator. The *ground* of the sinner's justification, is this compact between the two persons of the Godhead; the *conditions* are penitence and faith. We may thus perceive why justification is said not to have its foundation in any righteousness of the creature; but in this compact with Christ, that by two immutable things, * * * we may have a strong consolation who have fled to him for refuge.*

It is evident, from what has already been stated, that no degree of righteousness, or obedience, can atone for past delinquencies; therefore, by the sacrifice and mediation of Christ, the sinner is restored to the favor of God, and justified freely by his grace, through the redemption there is in Christ,† by whose continued intercession he will be kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.‡

From this illustration, it may be perceived that the exercise of faith leads the soul to seek salvation with all its energies. A sick man will not journey hundreds of miles to try the efficacy of a medicinal spring, unless he has faith enough in its virtues to induce the experiment. Until the faith of Naaman

* Heb. vi, 18. † Rom. iii, 24. ‡ 1 Pet. i, 5.

was excited to the requisite point, he would not comply with the directions of the prophet. If he had remained faithless, Jordan's stream would have flowed on in its gentle course, but he would have died a miserable leper.* If Bartimeas had not possessed faith in the ability and disposition of Christ to heal him, and in the exercise of that faith, cried, with intense desire, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me,† the Savior would have passed by—restoration would have been within his reach, but the long night of darkness would have continued, and the cheering light of the sun never broken in glory upon his vision. So, if the polluted and blinded sinner does not possess sufficient faith to try the remedy which God has provided, the kingdom of God will have come very nigh to his soul,‡ but he will never feel the joy of pardoned sin.

The condition of mankind is, in some respects, like that of Esther, when she rushed into the presence of the king, and by this act saved her nation; only with this striking difference: she jeopardized her own life,—for it was death by the laws of Persia to come into the presence of the king unbidden,—while the sinner is invited and entreated to come to Christ. The process of reasoning which determined her conduct, was extremely simple.‖ If she remained quiet, death was certain. This, then, was her *only hope*.

* 2 Kings v. † Mark x, 47. ‡ Luke x, 11. ‖ Esther v.

When the sinner, despairing of salvation in any other way, deliberately takes a position at the foot of the cross, feeling — as Job expresses himself — Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;* and has fully determined to live and die in the service of Christ, he is *very near* the kingdom of heaven. And when he believes that the promises of the gospel are directed to him *personally*, as much as though there were not another individual in the world, his soul has found a safe resting place, and has entered upon that new and living way consecrated by Christ.

If the mind has been powerfully convicted of sin, it will sometimes feel immediately the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Self-condemnation is gone, and the "Sun of Righteousness" rises upon the darkened spirit with transcendent glory. He then appreciates the beautiful sentiment expressed by the sacred poet —

> "When God revealed his gracions name,
> And changed my mournful state,
> My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,
> The change appeared so great."

But whether this evidence be *immediately* obtained or not, it will soon be discovered in the performance of christian duty. Those pursuits which were once disgusting to the mind, and that society which was once irksome, will be the source of its chief happiness.

* Job xiii, 15.

All children born into the natural world are not equally robust; but some need careful nursing before they give signs of life; and are nourished into the vigor and bloom of health. So it is of those who are born of the Spirit. Instead, therefore, of looking for more light, or waiting for light to come to the soul, it should go on to those regions where light is to be found, by entering immediately upon the *discharge of christian duty.* Here is a point where many stop—a kind of half-way house, where the pilgrim tarries too long. The evidence of regeneration is generally obtained in the discharge of some religious duty, and is found in the satisfaction which the soul feels in its performance.

Whenever there is a conscious neglect of any duty, whether it be family or social prayer, the soul cannot feel the peace of God which passeth all understanding,* because there is still a warfare within—a contest between inclination and duty—which fills it with doubt and distraction. But when every sin is abandoned, and the cross taken up, there is a heavenly peace stealing over the spirit, allaying this tumult. It is like the feelings which a child experiences when, after a long and painful contest, he submits, and is reinstated in the affections of the parent. Sometimes it may fill the soul with joy amounting almost to transports, but *generally it is*

* Philip. iv, 7.

peace,—The peace which God giveth, such as the world cannot give or take away.* There is frequently a disinclination at this point to follow the direction of those who, from long experience of the pleasures and trials of christian life, are qualified to direct the course of the inquirer or the young convert; and by pursuing their own way they soon get into difficulty. There is no *stopping place* in the christian course; the farther the soul advances, the brighter and plainer will his path appear. If like Paul, he forgets the things that are behind, and reaches to those that are before,† God will soon breathe upon him the spirit of adoption, so that with filial confidence, he may look up to him and cry Abba, Father.‡

These exercises of heart, which accompany regeneration, and which are made the conditions of salvation, do not leave it so soon as the work is completed, but they become abiding principles in the soul. They are not like meteoric flashes, radiating across it for a moment, and then leaving the soul in darkness more intense; but they are such as become a matter of daily experience, at times filling it with joy and peace in believing.‖

The time necessarily occupied in passing through these separate exercises, need not be so long as it

* John xiv, 27. † Philipp. iii, 13 ‡ Rom. viii, 15. ‖ Rom. xv, 13.

has taken to describe them. Conviction, repentance, faith and joy, *may* come over the soul like successive flashes of lightning along the summer horizon. But sometimes it labors long under conviction, because it is clinging to some cherished sin. Sometimes it refuses to take up a particular cross, and like Bunyan's Pilgrim, *will* wade through the slough of Despond, and tremble under the heavings and earthquakes of Sinai, before it seeks the CONSECRATED WAY. So long as there is a *point at issue* between God and the sinner, the soul will remain in darkness. If every duty were practiced as soon as discovered, the way would be clear in relation to the next; thus one obstacle after another would be removed, until the last difficulty were encountered, and the last foe vanquished. If a man upon a journey were to sit himself down at the foot of a beetling mountain, and survey the precipices and hanging rocks, that rise in gradation above him, he might conclude the ascent to be impracticable, and abandon it. But perhaps another, of a more persevering spirit, would follow the mountain path, as it winds its way between the rocks, and upon the sides of precipices, at each turn discovering his path clear to the next, until with every obstacle surmounted, he could look back over his course with satisfaction, and gaze upon the prospect offered to his view with delight.

We have now traveled along this consecrated way, until we have arrived at an interesting point. I hope, therefore, that the reader will pardon the familiarity, if I attempt, in this connexion, to hold a short communion with him; and in view of the sublime and important truth presented to the mind, urge the duty of giving it an immediate attention.

If these exercises of heart have been correctly represented, it is plain that religion demands nothing unreasonable. These are all the rational exercises of an intelligent mind, and practical truths are not involved, (as some suppose,) in impenetrable mystery.

From the nature of the case, there are some things in the attributes and government of God, which transcend all finite comprehension. These are revealed, not to create difficulties in the mind, but to show that God is worthy our confidence, *because he is so great.*

We are frequently as unreasonable as a child would be, who should commence the science of numbers in geometry; then, because he could not surmount the difficulties which it presented, abandon the science. In all kinds of education we should begin at the simplest truths, and when these have been mastered, go on to those that are more difficult. In religious matters, we should repent of sin, seek for salvation, and *obey God*, rather than

distress ourselves about those things which, from their nature, are beyond our comprehension.

"It is said of Paley, that he was while at college, an idle spendthrift, until one morning a rich and dissipated fellow-student came into his room with this singular reproof. He says, Paley, I have been thinking what a fool you make of yourself. I have the means of dissipation, and can afford to be idle. You are poor and cannot afford it. I should make nothing if I were to apply myself; you are capable of rising to eminence; and pressed with this truth, I have come solemnly to admonish you." Struck with the force of this reasoning, Paley immediately abandoned his dissolute life, and afterwards became an eminent teacher of religion. Now, when you are told that you cannot afford to waste the short season of probation in sin, why cannot you resolve immediately to abandon it? The formation of such a resolution is not regeneration, but it is the first, and an indispensable step toward it. Until this purpose is formed, neither prayers or inquiries will avail. This is a work which rests entirely with yourself, as much as a resolution to take a journey to some distant place. Your own energies must be put forth in an effort to obtain salvation, before God will stretch out his hand to save you. You surely cannot complain that He is unreasonable in what he demands, or that the way of salvation is not as easy as it could be made, consistent

with the end designed—the glory of God and the happiness of his creatures. It requires no self-torture, either mental or physical, no price as a ransom, no blood of bulls and of goats offered by a mediating priest. It is only to accept the proffered mediation of Christ, who has offered himself as a ransom for your sins, and for the sins of all who will believe on him. This is the Father's will, that every one that believeth on the Son may have life, * * * and I will raise him up at the last day.* What can be more honorable to God, and more merciful to the offender, than this?

There is danger in lingering too long on the way to the cross. The Philippian jailor was brought from the darkness of heathenism, and introduced into the fold of Christ in a single night. The Eunuch obeyed the instruction of Philip immediately, and went on his way rejoicing. Many of the early disciples never heard but one gospel sermon, yet hundreds and thousands of them believed.

How transient these separate exercises must have been, and how suddenly faith succeeded to conviction! Why then this need of lingering for months and years as many do, (and as you perhaps are doing) on the way to Christ? You live under the same dispensation, you have the same law, the same gospel, the same consecrated way, the same Word and

* John vi, 40.

Spirit, why cannot you go to Christ now, as well as to spend a life in seeking the way?

If you have possessed sufficient interest in the subject of this treatise to peruse it thus far, it cannot be assuming too much, to suppose that you are seeking with some anxiety the way of salvation. Perhaps this desire has been felt while engaged in the business of life, or while mingling in its gaieties, or in the silence of midnight, when all other influences are withdrawn, and the soul left to commune with itself, and to meditate upon its immortality. God may have sent the "still small voice" as a word of exhortation, warning, or persuasion, like some guardian angel, to attend your wayward footsteps and lead you to himself. This influence, however gentle its operation, is from God. Be careful then, how you resist it, for in doing this you are resisting God. Follow its leadings, and it will conduct you to Calvary, up the consecrated way to heaven and happiness.

CHAPTER XI.

REGENERATION.

If a man of refinement and virtue were compelled to reside and fellowship with a society of outlaws, vulgar in their habits and wicked in their life; or a lady of great delicacy and sensitiveness, were required to associate with the abandoned of her own sex, it is evident that such society would be the source of exquisite torture. And if we reverse the supposition, and imagine one of these outcasts to be placed under the restraints of virtuous and religious society, we may readily conceive that these restraints would soon become inexpressibly irksome. This state of feeling would originate in the incompatibility of the tastes and habits of one, with those of the other; for it is evident that two beings so dissimilar in nature could feel no pleasure in each others society.

Now, Heaven is represented as a place where God, and an innumerable company of holy beings dwell together in perfect love. One spirit and one desire influences every soul. It is therefore evident that before any other soul is admitted into that

society, it must become like them in character and taste, or discord would immediately spread itself through the ranks of the redeemed. If there were no cherubim to guard the gate of the heavenly Paradise from all that is unholy or impure, when the nature of its joys was understood, it would be the last place that the unregenerate heart would seek to enter. There is a natural obstacle in the way of the enjoyment of heaven, which must be removed, or the soul will sink eternally into deeper depths of sin and suffer its attendant misery. A taste for that kind of happiness and a love for those pursuits which characterize the heavenly world, must be acquired before heaven can be a desirable habitation for the soul.

God is represented as a being of spotless purity, entertaining an utter abhorrence to sin. Man is corrupt in his desires, and wedded to sin in his life. This dissimilarity in their respective natures incapacitates him for happiness from that source from whence holy beings recive their felicity — the enjoyment of God, and delight in doing his will; for this reason it is said that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.*

The human mind can conceive of no other final state, except a heaven of perfect love and concord, and a hell of hatred and confusion, without first dethroning God, and blotting out the hope of future

* Heb. xii, 14.

blessedness from every heart. It is true, that in this world, we behold a commingling of virtue and vice, of sin and holiness; because it is a probationary state; therefore the rewards of virtue and punishment of vice are imperfectly exhibited. But perfection in virtue and order are embraced in the very idea of happiness as the final reward of the virtuous; and this of course excludes all that is sinful and disorderly. Regeneration is the renewing of the moral nature, and so changing the will and the affections that these pursuits become congenial to the soul.

When we see an individual whose habits and tastes have been the opposite to all that is virtuous, suddenly assuming the christian name and reflecting in his life the virtues and graces of the christian character, or from a bloody persecutor, (as in the case of Paul,) suffering persecution himself, we are naturally lead to inquire what has produced this wonderful revolution. Whether, like reformation in morals, or changes in political sentiments, it is effected by reflection, or interest, and by a self-determining power in the will, or whether it is by an extraneous agent.

Many theories have existed respecting the nature of this work; some of them fatal in their tendency to all practical godliness; but which it is unnecessary to notice here. If, by examination of scripture we can determine what is there taught, it is of little

consequence what speculative opinions may have been entertained, because the truth itself, will furnish the best refutation of error.

It has been supposed by some that regeneration is a *gradual* change, effected in the moral character, solely by a continued and persevering effort on the part of the creature. But let us suppose that a man who was eagerly pressing his way down a certain road, should in view of some unforseen danger immediately turn and run the other direction. It is evident, that in a case like this, there must be a *point* where this change of direction is commenced. So it is with the sinner, when from the pursuit of sin he turns to the pursuit of holiness. It is evident, therefore that there must be a turning point, where he *ceases* to do evil and *begins* to do well. This turning point is the moment of regeneration.

It is a scripture truth, that the Holy Ghost dwells in the heart of the christian.* It follows then that there must be a time when he *begins* to make the soul a dwelling place. That moment is the moment of regeneration. If regeneration consists in a right determination of the will and of the affections, we must perceive that there is a point where the will is determined from sin to holiness, and the affections changed from self to God. Probably this mistake has resulted from the fact that *evidence* is not immediately obtained, and from the nature of

* 1 Cor. xvi, 17—vi, 19.

the case cannot be afforded until *after* the change is effected. This may be immediately consecutive to it, or delayed, according to the peculiar circumstances of the case. But in no case can there be evidence of an event, *until after that event has transpired.*

This evidence frequently comes to the soul like the dawning of the day; first a few pale and uncertain rays streak along the horizon, which gradually deepen their tints, until the heavens become resplendant with the golden beams of the rising sun. The work of the Holy Spirit can only be discerned by its fruits;* and when the creature finds new hopes, new desires, and new fears existing in his soul, he has the best possible evidence that old things have passed away, and all things have become new.†

The work of regeneration is often confounded with that of sanctification, which is a gradual developement of virtue in the heart, and an increase in the strength of every grace. But they are exercises distinct in their nature. One may be represented as the *implanting* of the gems of virtue in the heart, and the other as their *cultivation* and *perfection.*

The condition of man in a state of nature, may be compared to that of a planet thrown from its proper orbit, when impelled by its own centrifugal force, it falls continually into deeper darkness,

* Gal. v, 22. †2 Cor. v, 17.

In order to restore the wandering star, some new impulse must be given to it, because its own gravity, or any law which governed its course previous to that catastrophe is incompetent to the end. So man, having broken away from God, is urged on by his unholy passions farther from the course of virtue, and can only be restored by the intervention of some power extraneous to himself.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit, which must be recognized as the efficient cause of regeneration. That this is Bible doctrine is evident from such passages as the following: Paul says in his epistle to Titus that we are saved not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.*

The Savior, when instructing Nicodemus, says: Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.†

And again, it is said, A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.‡

These, and numerous kindred passages, which cannot be quoted at length, teach us that this change is effected by a Divine agent. They represent it as a work in its magnitude and effects equal to a new creation, or a new birth.

* Titus iii, 5. † John iii, 5–9. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi, 26—xi, 19; Ps. li, 10; Eph. iv, 24.

Other passages speak of it as imparting a new discernment to the understanding. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.*

And in another place it is said that the Lord *opened the heart* of Lydia, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of by Paul.†

While the Bible is explicit in teaching that the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of regeneration, it does not attempt to describe the mode of its operation; on the contrary, when the mind of Nicodemus was filled with astonishment, and naturally desirous of understanding more upon the subject, he enquired, *How* can these things be? The Savior intimated that he was pressing his enquiries beyond the appropriate limits of human investigation, for his reply was, The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but *canst not tell* whence it cometh or whither it goeth, *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*‡ That is, you have sufficient evidence of its agency and power by its *effects*, but to understand *how* it operates in the human heart, is a subject beyond your comprehension.

From this declaration, we presume that to determine how the Spirit operates upon the human will, in such a manner as to produce a definite result, and at the same time infringe upon none of its pre-

* 1 Cor. ii, 14. † Acts xvi, 14. ‡ John iii, 8.

rogatives; or what are the prescribed limits of each, is a point which it is impossible to settle. Says the learned Dr. Dwight, "So far as my acquaintance with the views, and reasoning of men extends, I entertain very faint hopes of seeing any good spring from speculations concerning *the nature of causes*, and the modes of *their operation*. The facts, that such and such causes exist, and that they operate to the production of such and such effects, we, in many instances, well understand. But the nature of the cause itself, and the nature of the manner of its efficiency are, in most instances too subtle, or too entirely hidden from our view, either to perceive at all, or to be so perceived as to become the materials of real and useful knowledge. Hence, probably, has been derived the fact that speculations on such subjects, though often satisfactory to the Philosopher himself, and to his immediate friends and followers, have rarely satisfied others. or procuced any lasting effect on mankind."* When one of the deepest thinkers who has ever written, has given such an opinion as this, it needs no apology for not introducing a subject so metaphysical in its nature in a treatise like the present.

It is the work of the Spirit, so to effect the soul that those motives which were once powerless, shall exert a preponderating influence upon the mind; making the *creature* willing in the day of his pow-

* Dwight's Theology, sermon lxxii.

er.* But when it is claimed that the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of this change, is it necessary to determine, "whether it goes with the truth of God to the constituent elements of the mind, gaining for God the predominant motive in the will, thus leading the sinner to do just what he ought to do himself, and just what he has constituent powers of mind to do," or whether it operates in some other way? If we determine the point, that whatever may be its mode, it operates in all cases in a way consistent with the freedom of the subject, it seems as though this is the place where our investigations should terminate.

While it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to operate thus upon the soul, it is the work of the creature to cease his resistance, and yield to its gracious drawings — to be active in turning from sin, and in using diligently all the means of grace.

Immaterial things are governed by laws peculiar to their nature, which are as fixed and definite in their operation as material; and whatever influence God may exert upon the human heart, it is evident that he cannot move a moral being by any other than by moral means. These, from their nature, are always consistent with moral freedom. When man influences the mind of his fellow man, he does it through the organs of sense, by the presentation

* Ps. cx, 3.

of motive, and the subject is sensible of the nature and extent of the influence at the time. But the Holy Spirit acts upon the soul without the intervention of these means; therefore, the nature and extent of its influence cannot be known except by its effects. It is as the still small voice moving upon the heart, and subduing it to God.* This is not an overpowering and *irresistable* influence, as some have supposed, for the creature is conceded the *fearful negative* power of preventing the Spirit from regenerating the heart. But, as is said by the author already quoted, it is an *unresisted* agency.†

If, then, the human will cannot be determined except by moral influences, it is evident that these can never infringe upon any prerogatives of the soul. As an illustration of this, suppose that one mind so operates upon another, by the presentation of motive, that an individual is induced to pursue a certain course of conduct. In this case the influence which he has brought to bear upon his mind, has actually done all that any kind of moral influence can do, by *producing a definite result.* But will any claim that the freedom of the will is destroyed in such a case? Certainly not; because it is a matter of consciousness that every man has power to yield to, or resist this kind of influence from any source. The plea that motives were irresistible, never jus-

* 1 Kings xix, 12. † Dwight's Theology, sermon lxxii.

tified a criminal before a civil tribunal; for in such cases, men act from an intuitive knowledge of what belongs to moral freedom, and not from their metaphysical speculations. But in the case supposed, a moral influence has done all that it can do in any case; because it has produced *the definite effect*.

Then let us suppose that a moral influence of a similar kind, exerted by the Holy Spirit, induces the sinner to repent and turn to God; does this destroy his moral freedom? Are not the cases parallel? Both have produced the *effect designed*, and neither can do more. Thus, we perceive, that whatever difficulties may involve this subject in relation to the Spirit's agency, the same difficulties meet us in the other case in all their force. And there are but two ways of getting out of the dilemma here suggested: One is, to deny that man is a free agent, in any case; and the other to admit that he is free in *all cases*, and under all circumstances. For it will not do to admit his freedom when influences from one source are presented, and deny it when the same kind of influence is exerted from a different source, and in both cases producing the same result, in determining the will. As already stated, when men act upon the strength of their innate or intuitive perceptions, and not by a perplexing course of reasoning, they invariably act right, and hold their fellow men responsible for

their conduct, no matter what influences from *men or devils* may have determined the mind.

This illustration has been introduced merely to show that it is possible for a moral being to be influenced and determined by a kind of agency, perfectly consistent with his freedom, and not to prove that it is *precisely* the *mode* in which the Holy Spirit operates; because, from the nature of the case, and from the declaration of the Savior to Nicodemus, we are led to believe that it is a question impossible to be determined by a process of reasoning.

This doctrine is frequently objected to, because it is claimed, that if regeneration depends upon an agent extraneous to the soul, it removes all responsibility from the creature, and all guilt in remaining in an unregenerate state. This objection can be answered better by illustration than by direct argument.

Let us then suppose that we are walking together in the fields, and we behold the husbandman busy in preparing the soil, and scattering the seed. Now, we know that *he has no power* to cause a single grain to germinate. But he goes on, as intent upon his labor as though the event depended entirely upon him, while he expects God to send the rain and the sunshine, and all those genial influences which are indispensable to success, and in the end reaps an abundant harvest.

But suppose that we meet with another of a different character, who says that the elements of nature are not under his control. If he plows and sows, he has no assurance that God will send the early and latter rain. As all depends upon God at last, he will leave the whole matter in his hands, either to cause the grain to spring up spontaneously, or permit the soil to remain barren and unfruitful, according to his sovereign pleasure.

Who does not know that with unerring certainty this man will beg in harvest, and have nothing?*

The analogy between the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace is perfect, and though we cannot persuade men to risk their property upon a theory so absurd, there are thousands jeopardizing their souls upon this short-sighted and false system of reasoning, and the inference is that they think more of their property than they do of their souls.

The same Almighty power that reproduces the grain, could do it without the assistance of man; but out of regard to the happiness of his creatures, he has made it dependent upon their personal exertions; and having adopted this general plan of operations, he perceives no good reason for departing from it; therefore, if the agriculturist waits for God to work in a different manner, he will die of starvation. And in the other case, the same Almighty

*Prov. xx, 4.

power that regenerates the heart, could do it without prayer and inquiry; but having for wise reasons adopted another plan, he would not be consistent with himself if he were to depart from it. Therefore, if the sinner waits for God to regenerate him without putting forth his own efforts, he will die unrenewed, and suffer the consequence of his folly in hell. God *cannot* work in the heart of the sinner without his concurrence, any more than he can in the field of the farmer; neither will he invade the prerogatives of the human will, and do those things for him which he has commanded him to do for himself: because it would be inconsistent with his plan of government, and the regard which he has for the rights of his creatures, for him to do so. It is this moral freedom that makes life a state of probation, and that renders its responsibilities so solemn. And every act of the creature, in resisting those influences by which God seeks to bring him to himself, reaches forward in its ultimate results to eternity, kindling within the soul the fire that is never quenched.

A chief element of future misery, is the remembrance, that once the soul possessed the power to *choose* life—once it had the strivings of the Holy Spirit in the heart—once it was surrounded by all that array of means and motives which God presents—urged upon the attention by the eloquence of preaching—fastened upon the conscience by a

divine energy; so that truth, conscience, and the Holy Ghost, were all despised, resisted and rejected. Wo be to the soul that is obliged to sustain such a load of guilt as this! It were better that it had never existed, or that this *living death* were exchanged for annihilation.

But these are the feelings with which the soul will review its probationary course, under the lash of an accusing conscience; and while they make the wretched outcast miserable, they will not for a moment impugn the justice of God in his punishment.

CHAPTER XII.

EFFECTS OF REGENERATION.

The Rev. David Brainerd, in relating his own experience, at the time of his regeneration, says: "I used to pray and perform other duties with great earnestness, and hoped by diligence and watchfulness soon to gain the point. Sometimes after enlargement in duty, and considerable affection, I hoped I had made a good step toward heaven, and imagined that God would hear such *sincere cries*, as I called them." But at length he adds: "I saw that these projects were vain, and that I could contrive nothing for my own relief." In this way, he says, that he was effectually and experimentally taught that "*there could be no way prescribed whereby a natural man could of his own strength, obtain that which is supernatural.* I saw at once, that all my contrivances and projects to procure deliverance and salvation for myself, were utterly vain. I was brought quite to a stand, as finding myself utterly lost. I had the greatest certainty that my state was forever miserable, for all that I could do, and wondered that I had never been sensible of it before.

* * * It was then, as I was walking in a dark thick grove, that unspeakable divine glory seemed to open to the view of my soul. It was a new, inward apprehension of God, such as I never had before. I stood still and wondered and admired. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see *such a God*, and I was pleased that he should be God over all forever and ever. My soul was so captivated with his excellence, loveliness, greatness, and his other perfections, that I was even swallowed up in him. I felt myself in a new world. The way of salvation opened with such infinite wisdom, suitableness and excellence, that I wondered that I should ever think of any other way. I was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances and complied with this blessed, *excellent way*, before."

This experience shows us more clearly than any description could, the nature of the change in the perceptions and affections, attendant upon regeneration.

When the soul is regenerated, or born again, by the Spirit, it is immediately justified in the sight of God, by the exercise of saving faith, and its personal relations to his laws and government are changed. With this change in relation, there is a corresponding change in the feelings and sympathies of the heart and in the perceptions of the mind. This may be illustrated by what we observe in society. As a matter of fact we know that our opin-

ions of the character and conduct of public men are powerfully affected by the sympathies of the heart. The wide differences of opinion which exist relative to these, do not result from a difference in the mental capacities of the two classes, or from a different evidence afforded to the mind, so much as from the state of the sympathies and affections of the heart, and the relations which we sustain to them respectively. Or we may find a more striking illustration in the case of one who, by violations of law, has exposed himself to its penalty. The man who suffers under the law, cannot be expected to regard it with the same feelings of admiration as the man who is protected by it. In these instances the intellectual perceptions are controlled by the relations of the individual and by the state of his sympathies and affections. So the different relation which the regenerated and justified soul sustains to the law and government of God, immediately produces a different state of the feelings, sympathies and affections; and this results directly in a new perception of religious truth—old truth appears in a new light, and all the powers of the understanding are enlisted, in discovering new beauties and sublimities in his book of revelation. Under the influence of right affections the clouds of skepticism vanish, as the glorious truth beams upon the soul with transcendent brightness.

This idea may be very clearly illustrated by the

cloud which guided the Israelites in their wanderings. To those upon one side it was a cloud of brightness, glorious to the sight, and an illumination to their path; but to those upon the other side, it was a cloud of darkness, spreading confusion and dismay among their ranks. As this presented a different appearance to the children of God and to their pursuers, so his truth appears to his friends and to his enemies. When the affections of the heart are enlisted for God, those passages of scripture, and those features of his character, that were particularly obnoxious, afford to the soul a delightful assurance that he is a sovereign competent to administer the government of the universe. With this change in the mental perceptions, there is a corresponding change in the object of pursuit. The attainment of holiness becomes the controlling desire of the soul, and prayer an exercise in which it delights. The society of kindred spirits is preferred to that of the vain and irreligious; new companionships are formed, and new relations assumed. A christian profession is felt to be a duty to God, as it affects his honor; and a privilege to the soul, as affording the means of religious cultivation. The Holy Ghost dwelling in the heart, the fruits of the Spirit* begin to be manifest in the life, modifying the character and subduing the natural and unholy passions of the soul. It allays the irritability of

* Gal. v, 22.

the temper, calms the tempest of passion, subdues the stubbornness of the will, humbles the pride of the heart, softens its implacability, and renders the creature meek, forgiving, disinterested and noble.

This is only an enumeration of some of the features which characterize regeneration, a few of which will be discussed more fully in the succeeding chapter. They are radical and permanent changes of character, which every one must have witnessed in individuals on whose veracity they can repose the most implicit confidence. It is a matter of surprise, that after the volumes of testimony to the verity of this change, which have been accumulated, and the evidence of its power, which has been exhibited in the lives of such men as Paul, Bunyan, Newton, and thousands of less eminence, any should doubt its reality, and contend that it is all a subtle deception. Are not such men competent judges of their own feelings and emotions; and when they declare, that whereas once they were blind they now see,* do they not know whether the eyes of their understanding have been opened, and a new discernment of spiritual things imparted to them or not? When a man whose word would not be impeached in secular matters, testifies from experience to the truth of this change, has he not the best opportunity of knowing whether it is substantial or delusive? And when the stout heart that could

* John ix, 25.

march to the very cannon's mouth without quailing, is seen trembling where there is no perceptible cause of fear—when the fountain within is broken up, and unbidden tears are seen bedewing the cheek at the narration of the simple tale of Calvary, surely we must be convinced that some unseen agent is working in his heart.

It is an error to suppose that the effect of regeneration will be to produce a perfect sameness of character; for while that retains many of its original features, religion will so modify it as to restrict the passions within proper limits. These peculiarities of character are to be observed in the Apostles, and they adapted them for the particular fields of labor to which the Savior directed them. John, the forerunner of Christ, was fitted by nature to the work for which he was selected. He was rough in his address and apparel, and in his deportment exhibited a perfect contempt for all the forms of society; and in this respect was calculated to excite attention. The Savior, on the other hand, was courteous and affable in his intercourse with the world, and so far as we can learn, a strict observer of the existing manners of society, when they did not interfere with his object.

The same contrast is exhibited between the characters of Peter and John. The first was resolute, determined and hasty, even to rashness, in his temperament, (*after his conversion*,) and this pe-

culiarity led him to many acts of indiscretion;* but when restrained within proper limits, it fitted him for eminent usefulness. John, on the other hand, was naturally of a sweet and amiable temper; and in his writings he exhibits those traits which endear him to all who are acquainted with them, and which caused the Savior to call him the beloved disciple.† Although we find more to admire and imitate in the character of John, than in that of Peter, yet the latter was the most successful preacher, and probably for these very characteristics, was selected to preach to the wicked crucifiers of the Savior, those cutting truths, which by their severity pricked them to the heart.‡

The same difference is manifest in the characters of Luther and Melancthon. Luther was bold, courageous and imperious, perhaps to a fault; yet this trait of character fitted him eminently for the post which he occupied as leader in the glorious work of reformation; while Melancthon was as peculiarly adapted by nature to the station which he occupied. One of these could not have done the work of the other, and both were necessary to the cause of truth. It needs all these varieties of character to impress different minds, and God, by regenerating the heart, does not cast every character in the same mould. He only brings these passions

* Mat. xxvi, 33,51. † John xiii, 23. ‡ Acts ii, 37.

within proper restraints, while the peculiarities of temperament remain unchanged.

We see by these examples, and many others which will doubtless be suggested to the mind of the reader, that we ought not to expect that every soul, though it passes through the same exercises, will become alike in its individual features; for while the same grand object will be placed before it, each will seek its attainment in his own particular way. These characteristics will expose every christian to peculiar temptations and difficulties; consequently their experience in subsequent life will be somewhat varied in its details, though alike in its general features.

For this reason, no christian should attempt to judge another by himself; or compare himself with another,* but in his attempts to satisfy his own mind in relation to his situation, he should be governed in his conclusions by those tests of character which are furnished in the Word of God.

*2 Cor. x, 12.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVIDENCES OF A STATE OF GRACE.

From the remarks immediately preceding, it is apparent, that in furnishing a few simple tests by which we may try ourselves,* reference can only be had to some indispensable characteristics of regeneration, and not to those details of christian experience, which vary in every individual case. If the doctrine of regeneration be true, there surely must be some way of *knowing* whether we have passed from death unto life.†

One reason why so many fail to obtain satisfactory evidence of regeneration, is because they mistake the source from whence it is to be derived, or the process by which it is to be obtained; and under the influence of this mistake are looking for a *different kind* of evidence from that which is laid down in the Word of God as the test of piety.

Religion possesses two distinct features; principles and feelings. The latter are fluctuating, and sometimes desert the breast altogether; but the for-

* 1 John iv, 1. †1 John iii, 14.

mer never change; for their roots are entwined around the springs of life, and cannot be eradicated without annihilating the soul; hence these should be regarded as the most important indices of character. Feelings are nothing of themselves, because they depend upon so many contingencies, that render them as fitful as an April day. But principles depend upon nothing less than the renewal of the soul by the Holy Ghost. The true christian may always find these evidences in his heart if he will search for them; no heart that has been changed is destitute of them, and no unchanged heart possesses them.

The character is frequently mistaken, and the soul thrown into a state of doubt; because the emotions of the heart are made the test of character, instead of the strength of christian principle. This examination, like all religious exercises, is to be governed by reason; and if regeneration consists in implanting new desires, new hopes and new fears in the heart, here is the place where we should look for its evidence.

Because the soul is not in an ecstacy of joy, the believer sometimes goes sorrowing on his pilgrimage when his mind should rest in *perfect assurance* upon the promises of God. Let us then attempt to discover what are some of those evidences of regeneration which remain under all circumstances, and which exist in all cases.

One of the first and most important of these, is a change in the governing purpose of the soul.

In a complicated machine there are many subordinate and contrary motions; but there is always a controlling power, which harmonizes the whole, and directs them all to one end. So in the heart of the christian, there are many conflicting passions and desires, but they are all governed to a greater or less extent by one controlling desire — to honor God. The navigator, who should sail upon a voyage to China, though he might be driven from his course by adverse winds, and tarry at some intermediate port for a season, yet amid all these deviations, he would find the same controlling purpose present in his mind. And the christian, though he may be led by the strength of temptation to do some things inconsistent with the end he designs, never changes his purpose, but upon its discovery, immediately attempts to retrieve his error. These deviations do not result from a change of the desire of his heart, but they are the consequences of human weakness. The existence of such a purpose does not imply that *every* act of his life will be in accordance with it, or that some particular acts may not be in direct opposition; for he is frequently constrained to say that he has *sinned and come short of the glory of God.** This subject may be more

* Rom. iii, 23.

forcibly illustrated by an incident in the history of one of the most remarkable men of modern times.

A little orphan boy,* friendless, and supported at school by the charity of an uncle, sat himself down upon the banks of a beautiful stream that meandered gracefully through a fertile vale, and there viewed with mingled emotions of pride and regret an ancient and massive castle, whose turrets rose in majesty above the surrounding park. As he remembered that these were once the halls of his ancestors, men renowned in the history of his country; and the melancholy reflections associated with this thought afflicted his spirit, he firmly resolved that it should be the controlling object of his life to redeem them from the hands of strangers. This purpose once formed, became the governing purpose of his mind, when he became a clerk to a merchant in London. It increased in strength when he pursued his fortunes in India. Says his biographer, "He pursued his plan with the calm but indomitable force of will, which was the most striking peculiarity of his character. When under a tropical sun he ruled fifty millions of Asiatics, his hopes amid all the cares of finance, of war, and of legislation pointed here. And when his long public life — so checkered with good and evil, with glory and obloquy — had at length closed, it *was there*, in the house of his

* Warren Hastings, afterward Governor General of India.

fathers, that he retired to linger out his last years and die."*

Here we see how every thing became subordinate to the great controlling purpose of his mind; and though many secondary objects came before it, and the arduous duties of his station were performed with promptitude, yet they were all subservient to this. Now, it seems plain, that when such a governing purpose is formed in the soul of the christian, in relation to honoring God and obtaining holiness of heart, he must be able to discover it, and that a purpose so formed must exert a controlling influence over the life. The unregenerate soul may feel some faint desires to be changed, and at times even inquire with considerable solicitude, What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?† but it can never come to the settled determination to live to the glory of God. Here appears to be a line of demarkation, which may be easily discovered; for when this determination is made, the object of pursuit being changed, the character and life must necessarily undergo a corresponding change. Faith without works is dead, being alone.‡

Another characteristic of the redeemed state, is the different views which the mind entertains of scripture truth.‖

How delightful it must be to the man who has

* Macauley's Essays. † Mat. xix, 16. ‡ Jas. ii, 17. ‖ See page 133.

been blind from his birth, to behold for the first time the beautiful verdure of the earth, and the endless variety of form and color, with which the God of infinite wisdom has decorated it. Or to see all that gorgeous drapery with which nature is invested, when the first beams of the morning sun gild the heavens with their golden lustre, converting even the dew-drop into a tiny prism, to reflect its glories to the eye. Surely, it must seem to such an one like a world of enchantment, too beautiful for continuance. And when convinced of its verity, the first act of the mind must be to render homage and praise to the great God of nature. But the soul that has experienced this spiritual discernment, undergoes a change equally surprising, though not always equally sudden, exerting an influence over every power of the mind, and investing even the operations of nature with new and unwonted charms.

This feeling of surprise and admiration is felt in a most wonderful degree, when the mind is engaged in contemplating its relations to the moral universe, which God governs and controls by universal laws. Beauty is discerned in what once appeared to be deformity, harmony in what was once discord, and utility in what was once felt to be oppression. The situation in this respect is like that of the man who has suddenly regained the points of compass, after

the mind has been perplexed from their loss; when every thing seems suddenly to change its relative position, but the change is really in the perceptions of the mind itself. The renewed soul is filled with astonishment at its former blindness, and with admiration at the new discoveries which are continually made. The law of God appears in its true character, — as a system of the most perfect justice*—as a transcript of the Divine mind—the bulwark of God's everlasting throne, and the pledge of the safety and stability of his universe.

Intimately associated with this, is a feeling of child-like confidence in the wisdom of his administration. When there is no love of God in the heart, it is impossible for the mind to reconcile his government with our limited notions of wisdom and justice, because his ways are not our ways;† therefore the soul is filled with distrust, imagining that he is so indifferent to our wants and woes as to inflict suffering without an object; or that he is so trammelled by his own laws, that he cannot prevent it. Thus the wicked arraign the benevolence of God in their hearts, when he thwarts their deep-laid schemes, and blasts their fond expectations. But when the soul is subdued, so as to repose with confidence in the expansive bosom of his paternal love; though the mind cannot fathom the purposes of him whose eye ranges through eternity, with keen dis-

*Ps: cxix, 47. †Is. lv, 8.

cernment of the condition of things through unnumbered cycles, and who governs all worlds by the same immutable and eternal laws; yet it understands that this proceeds from its own weakness, and not from any imperfection in God. The regenerate soul, instead of distrusting God, rejoices in the fact that he is so great and glorious that it cannot grasp his providential dispensations, any more than it can understand his works of nature;—thus evincing him to be one and the same—exalted above man as the heavens are exalted above earth.

This is a change in the mental perception that always accompanies the regeneration of the heart: not because there is any new power imparted to the understanding, but because the sympathies of the heart are changed; so that the position from whence observation is made is altered. Once it was from the ranks of God's enemies, with the cloudy pillar brooding darkness over the soul;* or from the foot of Sinai; with its awful thunders reverberating upon the ear, and inspiring it with terror—now it is from the foot of Calvary, with messages of love in soft and tender accents, inviting it to enter the consecrated way. Whatever difficulties may have perplexed the mind; whether they existed in contemplating the character of God, his laws or his government, they all vanish so soon as this new discernment is obtained. Those mysteries of God,

*See page 134.

which are veiled in impenetrable obscurity, it is content to leave until the time when that which is in part shall be done away.* As the obedient child experiences a virtuous pride in contemplating the greatness or goodness of a distinguished parent, so the christian feels, when he beholds the wisdom and glory of God, as displayed in his works of nature and of providence; then in humble devotion he delights to lift up his heart and cry my "Father which art in heaven." He would not have him any *less glorious*, *powerful*, or *mysterious*, if he could; for in proportion to the greatness of the Father, will be the elevation of those whom in infinite benignity he has called *sons and daughters of the* LORD ALMIGHTY.†

A third characteristic of the renewed man is the absence of servile fear.

When this confidence in the Divine administration, that we have been contemplating is obtained, its immediate effect is to banish fear: because one is incompatible with the other. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment.‡ Though the christian may possess that instinctive dread of death which is common to our nature, yet when brought into circumstances of peril, there is a wide difference to be observed between his deportment and that of the unregenerated. As dangers thicken around him his spirit rises above

*1 Cor. xiii, 10; John xiii, 7. †2 Cor. vi, 18. ‡1 John iv, 18.

them, in a degree sometimes surprising to himself. The truth of this has been frequently illustrated in a most striking manner by incidents that have occurred amid the dangers of the sea, and the perils of shipwreck.

When the ill-fated Atlantic, on her passage from Boston to New York, left her port with every prospect of a delightful voyage, her decks were thronged with immortal beings of various characters; so that it would have been impossible to designate, from any thing in their external appearance, who were christians and who were not. But when the raging tempest spread confusion and dismay among the thoughtless crowd, and the last expedient of nautical skill had failed, cries and shrieks, and lamentations and wailings, were heard on every side. But there was one,* who, amid all the confusion of the heart-rending scene, could speak with the calmness of christian confidence, and soon they flocked around him as though he had been an angel of mercy, or a being of a different order, while he talked with them, and prayed for them. This man had never mingled in the din of battle, he had no bloody trophies of his personal courage; but now, when every other heart quailed with craven fear, he, and those of a kindred spirit, could look with calmness upon the fierce contest of the elements, and view with resignation the prospect of a speedy death.

* The lamented Dr. Anderson.

The man who has learned to fear God as a righteous and holy being, fears not the *evidences* of his greatness and power, even though he falls beneath their fury; for in that power which

> "Makes the sleeping billows roll—
> The rolling billows sleep,"

he discerns the same Omnipotence, which will secure his redeemed ones, in the perils of the great day of retribution to the wicked.

This feeling, which is experienced in an eminent degree in the hour of danger, is always prevalent in the soul to some extent, overpowering the fear of death. It should not be understood by this, that it is necessary for an individual to overcome the instinctive feelings of our nature, before he may believe that his heart is regenerated; only that the fear of death is so much allayed by the presence of faith and hope, that he is not compelled, for his present peace, to drive all thoughts of the future from the mind, by a tumult of worldly care, or the excitement of pleasure, as do the unrenewed,—for while they can never look calmly and steadily into eternity, without an indescribable dread, it becomes a subject of daily meditation to the regenerated mind. Oh, what a change is this! To have all the terrors of judgment and a world of retribution forever banished from the soul. To feel no more anxious forebodings—no fearful looking for of judgment and

fiery indignation*—no more goadings of conscience. These, which hang like a pall upon the mind of the unregenerated, darkening all the chambers of the soul, are taken away, and succeeded by the clear sunlight of God's unchanging love. This is not a state of mind which exists only in the imagination; for the soul that is renewed uniformly loses those lively apprehensions of future retribution, which so often disturb the peace of the ungodly. How frequently has this been exhibited in the triumphs of such as have died for the cause of truth, not only without fear, but in an ecstacy of delight at the prospect of a speedy though terrible deliverance. And how often has that hope, which in health and prosperity has been feeble and fluctuating, brightened in adversity—when the sinking spirit most needs its consolations; so that when the night of death has gathered over the *seen and temporal*, the eye of faith has opened, with enchanted vision, upon the UNSEEN AND ETERNAL.† A renewal of the heart by the Spirit, not only banishes this servile fear from the soul, but it gives existence to a kind of fear which is peculiar to this state; also to a concern, which has never before been experienced.

The desire of the unregenerate soul is to live in the practice of sin, if it were possible to do so and escape its consequence at last. But when it is re-

* Heb. x, 27. †2 Cor. iv, 18.

newed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness,* the concern is to be kept from sin itself, not so much from fear of punishment, as from the fact that it is offensive to God, and hateful in its own nature.

This distinction may be readily perceived by a simple illustration. Suppose that a parent leaves his children to amuse themselves with their childish sports, in their own manner, only, placing a few general restrictions upon their conduct; but during his absence, a wicked companion tempts them to break over those limits which the father has assigned them. One replies, "I would gladly yield to your request, but I shall be punished if I do." The other says, "I cannot disobey my parent, because I should grieve him." It is evident that one of these children is *coerced by fear* of the rod, but the other is *induced by filial love*. So the child of God dreads sin, because it is a transgression of the law of his Heavenly Parent, and justly forfeits his love. Nor is this all: he feels not only a desire to be preserved from what is offensive to God, but a deep concern for his honor and glory; and is grieved at any thing in the conduct of others that shows a disrespect towards him.

A gentleman who had been deeply solicitous respecting his condition, and distressed in his mind, because he could not obtain satisfactory evidence of

* Eph. iv, 24.

his acceptance with God, was travelling on board a steamboat, where there was a company of very profane men, engaged in gambling. Their conduct, and especially their language, was so excessively annoying to him, that suddenly the thought came into his mind, should I feel this disgust at this conduct if it were true that my heart were not changed by Divine grace? This impression came over his soul with such overpowering conviction, that he could hardly keep from rejoicing and praising God in the presence of the multitude. This man reasoned like a philosopher and a christian. It is but natural that the subject should feel concern for the honor of his nation; or a child for the reputation of his parent;—not to do so would manifest a wrong state of feeling toward them. We should therefore expect that when the creature is adopted into the family of God, and made a subject of Christ's kingdom, he would feel a concern for his honor. This was the spirit that actuated Moses, when God revealed to him his purpose of destroying Israel, but promised at the same time to make a great nation of his seed. The language of Moses was, When the Egyptians shall hear it, they will mock and revile, and say that God was not able to fulfil his promise.* Here he preferred the honor of God to his own individual aggrandizement.

The christian possesses such a deep concern for

* Num. xiv, 17.

the honor of his heavenly Father, that he would gladly behold all creature interest merged in the interest of the Creator. He cannot hear the name of God blasphemed without pain; and the dishonor which he suffers, by the conduct of wicked men and false professors, is a cause of great heaviness of heart. Others may co-operate in schemes of benevolence and in measures calculated to extend the kingdom of Christ, from a laudable desire to befriend their fellow beings; but the christian is actuated by a higher and holier motive than this—a desire to see the knowledge and glory of God fill the earth, and all its teeming millions acknowledge Messiah's sway.

This presents to our minds an imperfect representation of some of the internal workings of the renewed soul—not indeed, the characteristics of a high degree of christian attainment in sanctification—but they are the indispensable features of true piety, existing in every regenerated heart. They do not attract our attention like those powerful emotions which sometimes sweep over the soul, causing every chord to thrill with delight; therefore, they are too often overlooked in our estimate of character. The emotions of the heart are sometimes like the mountain torrent, tumultuous and irregular; but its principles are like the even course of a mighty river, placid and silent in its flowing, but deep and

permanent. Here, then, is where the most satisfactory evidence of our condition is to be found; and the soul must be renewed in its nature before they can exist: for such principles are entirely incompatible with the taste and feelings of the natural heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF A STATE OF GRACE.

When the glorious sun, which God has established in the centre of this planetary system, imparts its light to the inferior orbs, it is a universal law that its glories must be reflected to other worlds; thus the extent and beauty of the system is manifested to the intelligent universe. This analogy holds good in his moral world. When the Sun of Righteousness has dawned in brightness upon the soul of the believer, he should reflect his glory to the world, that by this exhibition of the beauty of holiness, the influence of christian character may be felt upon society. Christ says, By their fruits ye shall know them.* If the soul has adopted new principles of action, and is sincerely directing its efforts to obtain holiness, it is evident that there must be an indication of this by a change in the character and life. The Spirit is active in its operations in the human heart, and its fruits are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.†

*Mat. vii, 20. †Gal. v, 25.

Some have thought that there is a discrepancy in the writings of Paul and James; because one treats of faith as the condition of justification, doctrinally, while the other treats of works as the *evidence* of faith, practically.

Paul says we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. Not by the law—for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified—nor by works, lest any man should boast.*

James says, Faith without works is dead, being alone. It is like saying to the hungry and naked, Be ye warmed, and be ye fed. But in immediate connexion he says also, Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.†

Whoever reads the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, will find this subject elaborately discussed and illustrated. There, Paul shows that faith was the moving cause of all those acts which secured the blessing of God to his ancient servants. Instead of discrepancy, then, we behold a beautiful harmony between these different writers, teaching us that in proportion to the strength of our faith will be our zeal in serving Christ.

After the conversion of Saul, God appeared to Ananias, and directed him to go and search him

* Rom. iii, 24; Gal. ii, 16; Eph. ii, 9. †James ii, 16–26.

out, for he says, Behold he prayeth.* What evidence could be more convincing than to behold this bloody persecutor of the flock of Christ, humbly seeking forgiveness of the God whom he had offended. Ungodly men at times pray with great earnestness, when alarmed or afflicted; but they have not that spirit of devotion, which is continually exercised with emotions of adoration, gratitude, or fervent supplication.

> "Prayer is the believer's vital breath,
> The christian's native air."

Not that he always feels the same delight and comfort in his devotion; for sometimes, like Christ's followers of old, the spirit is willing while the flesh is weak.† But if cold in his devotion, the christian prays for greater love and zeal. If unbelieving, he prays for stronger faith. If sinful thoughts harass his soul, he prays to be preserved from temptation. If he has fallen into sin, he prays to be delivered from evil. Whatever burden may lay upon his heart, pressing down the springs of christian joy, his remedy is prayer.

If the principle here referred to be true, it is apparent that no evidence of piety can be satisfactory, unless it is manifested by producing a change in the character and life. Upon this is founded the duty of a christian profession, which may be enforced upon

* Acts ix, 11. † Mat. xxvi, 41.

the mind by two considerations, both of which are of vital consequence to the health and happiness of the soul—these are the interests of Christ's kingdom, and its own preservation. A public profession is merely carrying into effect a purpose previously existing in the mind. It is publicly putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, * * * and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* It is proclaiming to the world, that we have no confidence in any other way of salvation, except that which is offered through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It is declaring that the individual feels no pleasure in reviewing his previous life; and with deep penitence he desires that his present conduct shall, so far as it is possible, counteract its influence. It is a solemn consecration of the soul and body to God, dedicating them to him, and promising that his interest shall be the first in the heart, and his honor preferred before every other consideration. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, * * * that they which live should not henceforth live *unto themselves*, but unto him *which died for them*, and rose again.† An obligation of this kind is so plain, from the teaching and example of Christ and his apostles, that the mind which does not perceive it, has great reason to doubt whether

* Eph. iv, 22. †2 Cor. v, 15.

the heart is yet right in the sight of God. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. He that *taketh not up his cross* and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

There are many who imagine, (or at least pretend to,) that they can serve God as acceptably out of the church as in it. Now, if this were true, God would never have established a church at all. Every great moral enterprize is carried on by combination, so that a multitude can act with the unity of one man; and if there is an obligation imposed upon one believer to bear the christian name, the obligation rests equally upon all. That Christ has instituted such an organization, few who believe in his written revelation will be disposed to deny; and its object must be apparent enough to every reflecting mind to establish the duty beyond question.

He says, Ye are the light of the world. * * * Let *your* light so shine that *others*, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.† How can the christian let his light shine if he refuses to make a profession of his faith before men? When an individual does not profess Christ, it is taken for granted that he is relying on some other ground for salvation; hence if his character be good, and his influence extensive, it is necessarily

* Mat. x, 33-38. † Mat. v, 46.

exerted in opposition to him, and the injury is in proportion to the extent of that influence. If every christian were to pursue such a course, it is easy to perceive that the light of christianity would soon fade into darkness. Whatever our conditions may be in life, there are none without an influence; and God holds us accountable for the direction of that influence.

He will not judge us all alike; but according to these gifts with which he has endowed us, whether of property or education; and every circumstance that increases our influence increases our responsibility.

There are none so ignorant or so humble but they may do something in his vineyard; and there are duties and responsibilities in this great field adapted to the circumstances and capacities of every individual. Because God has not given us five talents, it will be no excuse for neglecting the one.

Suppose that one of those little mountain rills, that sparkles so freely in its rocky bed, should say, I am but a little stream, surely I may withhold my contribution, and it will not be felt by the great torrent that rolls with such majesty and power. I will seek some deep cavern in the mountain, and there pour out my waters, screened from observation. A neighboring brook hears the soliloquy, and says, why do I labor to find my way between the deep

chasms of the rocks, down the mountain side to the river's bed. It is but little that I can do to turn the miller's wheel, or bear up the freighted steamer. Why suffer myself to be lashed and polluted by these vexatious engines? I will seek some quiet bed, where I may flow on in silence and security to the ocean. The contagion spreads from one to another, until all have diverted their course, or in other words, withheld their influence.

Where now is your majestic stream? Instead of healthful dews, there rises from its filthy bed a pestilential vapor, spreading sickness and death along its course. The wheel of the miller stands warping in the sun. The steamboat lies upon its side, like a leviathan of the deep, thrown upon the strand and forsaken by the tide. The cattle come down from the hills to quench their thirst, and lie panting and gasping upon its brink.

Such is individual influence. The dew-drop that hangs trembling upon the leaf, seems to be one of the least objects in nature; yet it is the combination of just such particles as this, that creates the mighty stream — leaping from its rocky bed, and rending the air with its thunderings.

Now, who can withhold this influence from the cause of Christ without guilt? And who that is unwilling to bear the burden, ought to expect the reward?

But however important the duty of a christian

profession may be to the interests of Christ's kingdom, it is of more importance to the individual himself; because it presents the most satisfactory evidence of repentance, humility and love, and affords to him the means of religious cultivation. The word of God contains many precious promises relative to the preservation and final salvation of his saints; yet these are all predicated upon a diligent use of the means. And it would be just as rational to expect the sinner to be converted, independent of the means of grace, as for the saint to persevere without them. The individual that is not willing to obey Christ, cannot, from the nature of the case, obtain evidence of his acceptance with God; because it would be inconsistent in him and prejudicial to the interests of the soul itself, if he were to fill it with joy and peace, while it is living in the neglect of a solemn duty, and in violation of an *express command*.* The regular performance of those duties which a christian profession enjoins, is necessary to the health of the soul; and if they are neglected, it will soon be left a prey to doubts and fears, or to the commission of open and flagrant sin.

There are times in the history of every christian, when he requires the restraints of this obligation, to hold the soul as with an anchor. As the evidences and comforts of religion, result in a great measure from a strict performance of its duties, we cannot

* Luke xiv, 27—xxii, 19—xxiv, 48; Heb. iv, 14.

possess the one without we observe the other. Wherever there is a soul reposing itself with confidence upon Christ, as the author and finisher of its faith, we shall find the individual not only *professing* Christ, but holding fast to that profession. On the other hand, whenever we find one tormented with doubts and fears, we shall probably find it neglecting some obvious and pressing duty. If we are faithful to Christ, he will be faithful to us; for upon this condition only, it is promised that we shall be kept by his power, through faith unto salvation.* This thought is most clearly expressed in these words: Let us draw near in *full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. * * * *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith* without wavering, for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.† This passage, in connexion with what precedes it, teaches us, that the fact that we have a faithful High Priest, taken in connexion with the fact that we are *holding fast to our profession*, by provoking one another to love and good works, is the ground of *a full assurance of faith.*

There can be nothing more delightful to the christian, than the evidences contained in the word

* 1 Pet. i, 6. † Heb. x, 25.

of God, of his faithfulness to his people. How tender and beautiful the comparison, where Christ represents himself as the good shepherd, who watches over and preserves his saints. As the herdsman leads his flock into verdant meadows and to the refreshing fountain, so he has said, that his sheep hear his voice and they follow him. He maketh them to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth them beside the still waters. He defends them from all that seek to destroy, taking the tender ones in his arms, and folding them in his bosom.*

If, forgetting the ground of our justification, we regard our *own* virtue and obedience as the cause of our acceptance with God, we shall probably be distracted with doubts and fears; but if we look to the sacrifice of Christ, our mediating High Priest, as the ground of justification, and to a good profession before men, as an evidence of a state of grace, we may at all times draw near with a true heart, and full assurance of faith, and enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil.† The provision for salvation is so ample, that we may be *assured* that he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

In bringing this subject to a conclusion, I would lay before the mind of the reader a few general principles, which have been developed in its pro-

* John x, 27; Ps. xxii, 3; Is. xl, 11. † Heb. x, 22.

gress, by which the character may be tested, and the condition of the soul discovered. The heart that has been renewed by divine grace, will discover within it a new principle of action which did not once exist there. It will constitute its leading desire to be released from sin — to obtain holiness — to honor God, and to meet the noble end for which it was endowed with immortality. It will possess a love of the character and attributes of God, and an admiration of his government and laws. It will feel a tender compassion toward those who are spending their day of grace in stupid insensibility of their true relation to God. It is not a sufficient evidence of regeneration, that an individual has once experienced a strange tumult within the soul, which has been succeeded by a heavenly calm, if this be not followed by a radical and permanent change in the taste, — producing a love for those things it once hated, and a hatred for those that it once loved.* But if these new tastes and new principles of action do exist, even in a faint degree, the heart is changed, and the germs of those graces are already implanted, which by cultivation will bear fruit unto holiness, and in the end secure *everlasting life.*†

* 1 Pet. ii, 6. † 2 Cor. v, 17.

CHAPTER XV.

CHRISTIAN SANCTIFICATION.

When the infant is born into the natural world, he possesses all the features and senses of the full-grown man; but these must be perfected by exercise and experience, before he can attain the strength and wisdom of manhood. This presents a true representation of the christian, when first regenerated or born again: though he possesses the germs of virtue in his heart, they must be cultivated and nurtured, before he becomes a perfect one in Christ.

The work of sanctification is the developing and perfecting of these by exercise and experience. Regeneration is the implanting of correct principles and holy desires in the soul. Sanctification is their increase in strength, called in the scriptures growth in grace,* and aptly compared to the germination and development of a grain of wheat. First the blade, then the ear, after that the full-grown corn in the ear.† From what has already been advanced, it appears that the most satisfactory evidence of regeneration, is the discovery of new principles and

* 5 Pet. iii, 18. † Mark iv, 28.

new emotions in the soul. Sanctification is merely a higher degree of attainment; so that those graces which were at first feeble, and whose evidence was fluctuating, become, by cultivation, prominent characteristics. It embraces all the evidences of regeneration, rendered more apparent, because more matured; and some, which do not appear until a considerable degree of attainment in holiness has been made.

The method by which we are to ascertain the degree in which it exists, is simply to compare our views and feelings at the present time, with those that existed at a former period, or at the time when the soul began to rejoice with trembling. Growth in grace sometimes resembles the physical developments of our bodies. If we compare one day with another, the nicest discrimination can perceive no change in size or features; but if we measure ourselves with our infancy, we shall find that there has been a gradual development of every muscle and every sense. The soul that is created anew in Christ Jesus, adds to his faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.* The christian's life is like the journey of a traveller ascending an elevated mountain, where he sometimes descends into

* 2 Pet. i, 5.

deep dells, in which the sunlight of heaven is almost excluded, and that appear dark and dangerous; but he *never* returns again to the same level from which he started; for the altitude of the deepest of these is above the level of the base.

When the sinner is first regenerated, his whole soul is absorbed in viewing his own case. Doubts of sincerity, fear of deception, or apprehension that he is the victim of some grand delusive scheme of the adversary, are the most prominent features of his experience; but as the soul becomes confirmed in love, it loses in a measure these feelings of self-concern, or they become absorbed in its deep concern for the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family. At first, overcome with the benignity and condescension of Christ, in rescuing it from merited death, the trembling soul can only cry, *my* Lord and *my* God. But sanctification enlarges the vision, until the eye of faith sweeps the whole field of christian enterprise, and it relies upon the promises of God that all shall be redeemed from nature, and made to blossom like the garden of the Lord. Then, with a correct understanding of the means and agencies by which it is to be accomplished, he comprehends, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.* That

* Eph. iii, 18,19.

faith which was at first directed toward Christ as the Savior of one sinner, becomes so expanded by sanctification, that he feels like joining with the redeemed out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, in ascribing glory to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, forever.

The observation and desires of the child are circumscribed by very narrow limits; but the intellect becomes expanded by experience and knowledge, until the world is a theatre scarcely large enough for the development of its full capacity. So the heart of the believer becomes expanded by love, until it embraces the whole human family in its sympathies and prayers.

Another characteristic of sanctification, is a diminution of the power of sinful habit. When the soul is growing in grace, and making daily attainments in holiness, it is evident that those sinful habits and propensities that once reigned in the heart, must be subdued; because holiness and sin are incompatible, and as one increases the other must diminish. Satan, though busy with his machinations, dare not tempt it with such gross insinuations as he once did, lest he should shock the refined moral sense, and thus defeat his own object. For this reason, he changes his mode of attack, and robed as an angel of light, seeks to *mislead* the soul, rather than turn it back altogether. But the *habit* which it has acquired of spreading out its

wants before God, and seeking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will enable the christian to obtain an easy triumph over every temptation; because He that is for him, is stronger than Satan and all his host combined.* If faithful in the use of the means of preservation, he will always find in the end, that where sin abounds, grace has much more abounded.† God has promised that his grace shall be sufficient for us;‡ and though he permits us to be tempted and tried, it is not that we may be overcome, but that an opportunity may be afforded for these new principles implanted within the heart, to strengthen themselves; that in the end, the trial of our faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, * * * may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.‖ The necessity of this trial, to the perfection of christian character, may be illustrated by a beautiful analogy. Suppose that we permit the rose to germinate in the cellar, screened from the rude action of the elements of nature, we know very well that it will possess neither strength of fibre or beauty of color. The sun of heaven must shine upon it, even though at times it wilts under its meridian power—the rain must not only distil over it its gentle showers, but at times beat off its foliage and shake it down to its deepest roots; but all this rude handling will only give it strength and beauty at last. As the winds

*Mat. xxviii, 20. †Rom. v, 20. ‡2 Cor. xii, 9. ‖1 Pet. i, 7.

and rain, the sunshine and cold, impart strength and beauty to the natural plant, so temptations and trials give vigor and loveliness to the christian character. He could not grow in grace, unless there were obstacles to be overcome, by which to test the strength of christian principle in the heart. And the degree of moral courage and self-mastery which the soul possesses, will indicate the degree of its sanctification. Love that was once warm, becomes ardent—zeal that was languid, becomes burning—faith that was weak, becomes strong; until, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory.* By beholding much of the glory of the Lord, and communing often with the Father of spirits, the soul becomes gradually assimilated to him in its nature, by a constant series of progressive movements, from glory to glory.

The heart of man, in its natural state, may be compared to an uncultivated garden, filled with all kinds of noxious and unsightly weeds. It is the work of sanctification to eradicate them, and fill it with plants of grace; therefore we are commanded to keep the heart with all diligence.† When the little plants begin to shoot up and put forth their tender and delicate leaves, they would soon languish and die without care and nurture. So the graces

*2 Cor. iii, 18. †Prov. iv, 23.

which are implanted within the heart, or the seeds of truth which may have begun to put forth their tender shoots, will soon die if left to themselves. If we would have our hearts filled with proper sentiments and emotions, we must cherish and sustain them by constant care. It is not sufficient to know that the germs of virtue have been implanted, but they must be strengthened and perfected, until they exhibit the *fruit*, then the soul can feast upon a harvest within itself. Many that possess the germs of every grace, leave them to languish and exhibit a sickly appearance, because the soil is encumbered with too many weeds. Here blooms a rare and beautiful rose, but it looks sickly, because it is overshadowed by a rank and unsightly weed. How much better it would be, if this were rooted out, and the rose permitted to bloom in all its native beauty, to be seen and admired by all.

How often do we see the christian character deformed by some of these plants of monstrous growth, because the heart is not well kept. That love of God and man, which should overshadow every thing else, and make the place beautiful, is obscured by a spirit of worldliness which almost conceals it from the sight; or, perhaps the virtue of meekness is obscured by a proud and imperious temper.

It is easier to have one's garden filled with wild and noxious plants, than beautiful exotics; because

they are natural to the soil; and so in the heart, those passions and wicked propensities of our nature which are indigenous, will grow without cultivation; but the graces of the Spirit are exotics—heavenly plants—which will die in this uncongenial soil, without great care.

Some christians appear to have more to contend with than others. Passion rages in the breast with greater violence, or temptations thicken from without, so as to impede the work of sanctification. For this reason, in the varieties of character that come under our observation, we find every degree of sanctification, from those who are trembling at every passing cloud, and discouraged at every obstacle, without ever obtaining any rich experience of the power of living faith, to those who are pressing on in the christian course, with delightful experience of its pleasures, that they may come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto perfect *ones*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

In the consecrated way along which the christian is toiling to his eternal rest, there are many dark and doleful regions, where, if he tarries, he will suffer a keener misery than the unregenerated soul can know, as the history of David shows. But

* Eph. iv, 13.

there are also summer regions, where the light of the heavenly world seems to beam upon the path.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach those heavenly hills,
Or walk those golden streets."

Why then, should the christian remain in the depths of winter, with the springs of happiness congealed in his heart, when he may possess a fountain of living waters, springing up unto everlasting life?*

It is because so many content themselves with regeneration, without sanctification, that they never experience the joys and delights of the christian life. It is one of the most solemn reflections connected with our probationary course, that our conduct here, is to affect the condition of the soul in eternity, and that the point of moral elevation where death finds us, will be the point from whence it will commence its progress to still greater attainments of knowledge and love, in the heavenly world.

* John iv, 14.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEGREE OF SANCTIFICATION.

The *duty* of sanctification is so evident, that it needs no argument to establish it. The writings of inspired men abound with directions, exhortations, and injunctions, to improve the gifts and graces which the Holy Spirit implants in the heart, and to go on unto perfection.* If holiness is desirable because of its own intrinsic excellence, or as a means of happiness, every argument that can be advanced to show the duty of becoming regenerate, may with equal propriety be urged here. The *means* by which it is to be obtained, are precisely the same in both cases—the Holy Ghost efficiently, and the creature instrumentally: both working together in perfect harmony. Hence the direction, Let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,† implies the same agency of the creature, that the command, *Make to yourselves* a new heart, does in regeneration.‡ In both cases, the will of the creature

* Heb. vi, 1. † 2 Cor. vii, 1. ‡ Ezek. xviii, 31.

must harmonize with the gracious leadings of the Spirit, and the truth be applied to the conscience with new energy.

The Savior recognizes this principle, when he prays, Sanctify them through thy truth,* or by the instrumentality of the truth; and Paul does the same, by declaring to his brethren that God had from the beginning, chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.† In every thing pertaining to christian life, we are to *act* as though all depended upon us, and to *feel* as though the power and glory belonged to God. In this way we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do his own good pleasure.‡ Sanctification, as already shown, is the subjugation of sinful propensity, the increase of holy emotions and desires, — the strengthening of faith, the perfecting of love, the casting out of fear. The *degree* to which we may attain in this world, is a subject that has excited much enquiry and no little controversy among christians. It would not be consistent with the design of this little volume to enter into this subject in a controversial spirit, or to examine the various opinions that have been held by different denominations. All that will be attempted, therefore, will be a plain

* John xvii, 17. †2 Thess. ii, 13. ‡Phil. ii, 12.

exposition of what appears to be the doctrine of the Bible, and our duty in relation to it. There never has been but one opinion respecting the degree of holiness that we are to seek after,—the only difference is in respect to the degree attainable. It is the plain direction of the word of God to go on to perfection.* He has placed no barriers in the way, and said, hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; but he has elevated it thus, for the purpose of enabling us to go on both through life and eternity. If there were no command of this kind, it seems as though our own reflections would teach us the duty of possessing the greatest possible degree of moral excellence. No mind that has once discovered the nature of sin and the beauty of holiness, can rationally infer, that our duty extends no farther than to seek a *partial* deliverance from its bondage, or to be partially sanctified by the Holy Spirit, or to obey God partially; because this would imply a tacit approbation of sin on his part. Nor would such an opinion as this comport with the directions and exhortations that abound in his word; such as, to cleanse ourselves from *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God†—Be ye holy, for I am holy,‡ and perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect.‖ In such passages, the duty of christian sanctification is expressly enjoined, the standard declared, and the reason given. Be-

* Heb. vi, 1. †2 Cor. vii, 1. ‡1 Pet. i, 16. ‖Mat. v, 48.

cause God cannot countenance the least degree of sin, either by precept or by implication, he has placed the standard as high as his own immaculate character. Suppose that instead of this, he had given us the character of one of the most perfect men that has ever lived, as a standard; then, it will be perceived, we might easily reach a point of attainment, where all the demands of God's law would be fully obeyed, and the individual continued in a state of justification by his own righteousness. Though the believer might be indebted to the sacrifice of Christ, in the first instance, for pardon and justification; yet, having once obtained this, he might continue in that state by *his own* obedience. This evidently conflicts with the scripture doctrine, that we are not only justified by the merit, obedience and death of Christ, in the first instance; but that his continued mediation and intercession are necessary to present us before God, blameless. If an individual is once justified, he is freed from the demands of the law up to that time, and he stands in the same relation to it as though he never sinned. If from that time forward, he obeys God perfectly, he is preserved in a state of justification by his own good works, therefore needs not the intercession of Christ. One of the many reasons why God has placed the standard so high, may be because he designs that the *whole* work of our redemption shall be of grace and not of right. Alas! how frail the

virtue of the most perfect of our race, and how unworthy our imitation the character of the most illustrious saints, when even the man who on account of his peculiar virtue, was designated the man after God's own heart, was compelled in remorse to cry, I acknowledge my transgression, and my *sin* is ever before me. Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.

But let us advance one degree higher, and suppose that he had placed the standard of christian attainment to which we are to aspire, as high as that possessed by an angel of light. This would answer for us so long as we tabernacle in the flesh, it is true, but it would fix a limit to our progress in another world. We must remember that in his government, God has not given one law or one measure to one class of moral beings, and a different one to another; but one universal rule of righteousness applies to all, because there can be but one law that is absolutely perfect. The law of heaven is no better than that of earth, and its society is not superior, because they have a different rule, but because the same law is more perfectly obeyed. He has, therefore, given us his own character as a standard, that there may be no limit to our eternal progression; so that we may grow in knowledge, in love, in holiness, and in every thing that is excellent, through time and through eternity. He has placed it so high, that to whatever degree the soul

may be elevated, there will still be a degree before it to which it has not attained, and that when cycles of ages have been spent in advancement, its course may still be onward and upward, nearer and nearer in its approximation to God. Whatever degree of light and blessedness may fill it with overflowing delight, there will still be regions of more excellent glory into which it may enter. The consecrated way begins at the brink of hell, and ends at the throne of God. The standard, then, at which the christian is to aim, is the only perfect one in the universe, and the command of God extends to every power of his soul, and faculty of his mind, in relation to his efforts to reach it. But objections are urged to this opinion, because it is said to require more of man than he has ability to perform, and that it is not right or consistent in God to demand of his creatures more than he has given them power to execute? This is not the first place where such an objection might be urged, for it applies with just as much force to the sinner, condemned and helpless, as it does to the believer imperfectly sanctified; and the answer to it is short and comprehensive. God does not measure his commands by *our ability*, but by his right. It was to sustain a holy law, that he devised the wonderful scheme of Atonement. If man's ability were a proper measure of law, it would have been much easier to have adapted that to his ability, in his fallen state, than to have

provided such a way to save him, and at the same time sustain the law in all its perfection. The creditor does not measure a just claim, or what is his right, by the means of an insolvent debtor; nor does God form a perfect rule of righteousness by an imperfect measure. The creditor may *accept of less*, out of consideration to the bankrupt state of the debtor; but if he does, it will be an act of grace, and not because he could not righteously have demanded the utmost farthing. So God measures his claim upon us by what is justly his due. Because man has become bankrupt toward him, shall he alter his demand to correspond with this condition? or while he holds up his right, as an inducement to obedience, to the extent of the creature's ability, and to show him his true relation, shall he justify and save him as an act of grace? If God were to do otherwise, his law would no longer be a *perfect* rule, nor possess either power to convict the sinner, or to elevate the saint to the highest dignity of his nature.

This is one of those numerous questions that meet us at almost every point in doctrinal enquiry, which ought to be answered by *facts*, rather than by theoretical speculations. We may not be able to discern clearly the reason why we cannot attain to a sinless state in this life: indeed, we may prove, in defence of an adopted theory, the possibility of such an attainment, with great plausibility. Yet,

unfortunately, the facts of history, and of our own experience, are directly against it. The error seems to be in supposing that a mortal being always does all that he may have constituent powers to perform; which is not true of any class of moral beings. For example, if asked the question, can angels sin? we may reply that power to sin is necessary to moral freedom. Angels are free agents; therefore angels can sin. If they have power to sin, of course they must exercise that power, else it is of no use to them; therefore it follows very legitimately that angels are in the habit of sinning. Though this looks very plausible in theory, yet all the facts in relation to their present state are against it; for none have sinned since Satan fell. Here it will be perceived, that the error lies in supposing that a moral being must necessarily do all that he has power to perform. The same thing may be said in relation to another class of beings. For aught we know, fallen spirits are in a state of voluntary sin. Though they are irrecoverably lost, and may desire to escape the consequence of their wickedness, yet there is no reason to suppose that they wish to forsake sin, any more than do wicked men. If, then, theirs is a state of voluntary sin, it implies a natural power to cease from sinning, else it is not voluntary. But all the facts of the Bible are against the doctrine that any have repented, or the opinion that any will repent through eternity.

If, then, in these cases, one of which is known to be true, and the other hypothetical, there exists a power in the moral constitution that is never put into exercise, why may not the same kind of power exist in the constitution of the human soul? And if a similar question be asked, whether man, assailed as he is by temptations, can attain to a sinless state, or in other words, perfectly obey the commands of God? we may reply in the same words, if sin be a voluntary act, it implies a power to cease from sinning; not only from one sin, but from all sin, else it is but voluntary. But if the angels, as one class of moral beings, possess a power that they never exercise, may not man do the same? It is an error to suppose that he must necessarily live in the exercise of every power pertaining to moral freedom, because as in the other cases, the facts of history, and the declarations of God's Word are against such a supposition; for this declares that there is no man that liveth and sinneth not.*

These, it will be perceived, are all metaphysical speculations, that can have no possible connexion with practical duty. They are questions that wind themselves through the whole system of christian doctrine, and cannot be followed out in all their intricate turnings, by those who have not examined thoroughly the relation of one doctrine to another.

The practical issue of this question, then, is *upon*

* 1 Kings viii, 46; 2 Chron. vi, 36; Eccl. vi, 20; Rom. iii, 23.

facts as to the degree of sanctification that the most eminent saints have attained. If we search for the most exalted of these, who can urge better claims to entire sanctification than Paul? "Who has surpassed him in love and zeal, and self-denying devotion to the service of Christ? Who possessed more exalted views of God, or more correct knowledge of the human heart?" But how exactly does his experience correspond with that of every believer, who is at all conversant with his own heart, when he says, I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* If we turn to one of the last of his epistles, written after he had received his wonderful revelations, we shall find the same sentiment, though expressed in different language. Not as though I had already attained, either were *already perfect*.† * * * To assert that he afterwards entertained any different views of himself is entirely gratuitous, because destitute of proof. This experience accords with that of hundreds of the most eminent saints who have left a record of it to posterity, and harmonizes with the design of God in making this world a state of trial and not of final triumph.

There are some errors in relation to this impor-

* Rom. vii, 27. † Phil. iii, 12,13.

tant doctrine which have lead to consequences the most disastrous, and others that are merely errors of opinion as to the powers of a moral agent. If, in order to harmonize a theory already adopted, we leave out of sight the declarations of the Bible, and overlooking the testimony of the most godly men in ancient or modern times, depress the standard of attainment down to a level with the capacity of a fallen and sinful being, our theory may be consistent in itself, but it will be an unsafe guide by which to regulate the practice. A course like this has induced some to deny their obligations to obey the law, under a gospel dispensation, and boldly to declare those things to be right, which God has said are sinful. Under the influence of these unhappy delusions, they have violated the Sabbath, because they claim to be so holy that every day is a Sabbath to them, (as it is to the angels,) and have even justified themselves in the most flagrant sins against society; because to the pure, all things are pure.* Thus, by bringing the standard down to the capacity of the carnal heart, instead of attempting to elevate the soul up to that, they have made shipwreck of their faith,† by making their practice to conform with their theory. By thus annulling the solemn and positive commands of God, it is to be feared they have had their part taken from the book of

* Titus i, 15. † 1 Tim. i, 19.

life, and from the holy city, and from the things which are written in that book.* These are some of the practical results of adopting wrong opinions in religious matters.

It is sometimes thought, that those who deny that a state of sinless perfection may be obtained in this world, are by their doctrine and influence, discouraging all efforts to advance in holiness; because it is asked what is the profit in seeking a thing which it is impossible to attain? But such an opinion, instead of applying to the advocates of this doctrine, applies to the objectors themselves. Will not a man who seeks to become a millionaire, be likely to acquire much more than the man who limits his desires and calculations to a few dollars? And will not the saint, who seeks to approximate as near as possible to God in his character, be far holier than the one who seeks only an *imperfect* kind of *perfection* at last? Though he may recognize the duty of progressing in attainment, yet the moment he attains a sinless state, he has obtained as *complete a victory* over the world, the flesh and the devil, as he ever can. Then probation is ended, and like the saint in glory, he has only to keep what he has already acquired,—there remains nothing before him, but like them to expand the heart to larger measures of love.

* Rev. xxii, 19.

This evidently conflicts with all our own received opinions, respecting the object of our existence here. It is not a state of glorification, but of probation, where we are to endure conflict as good soldiers, and when the last battle is fought, we are to lay our trophies down at the feet of the captain of our salvation, and receive our crown.

> "Ne'er think the victory *won*,
> Nor lay thine armor down:
> Thine arduous work will not be done
> Till thou obtain the crown."

Death alone will release us from the conflict. Then, when the fascinations and allurements of the world are withdrawn from the soul, and the propensities of the material frame no longer urge it to sin, and the machinations of Satan cease forever—faith being exchanged for vision, and hope for fruition—it will awake in the likeness of Christ, and having borne the image of the earthly, will forever bear the image of the heavenly.*

We have now arrived to the end of the Consecrated Way. If regarded as a part of that great system of doctrine, which is derived from the Bible, it begins with man depraved and desperately wicked in his heart—exposed to eternal death—and leaves him in possession of holy desires, and an heir of

*1 Cor. xv, 49.

eternal life—redeemed, justified, and sanctified for heaven.

In presenting these subjects to the mind of the reader, it has been a cause of continual embarrassment that some of the most vital doctrines of the Bible, (to be consistent with the design,) must be compressed within the compass of a few pages. For this reason, many important collateral truths have been necessarily omitted. But it is doubtless true, that enough has been unfolded to the mind, to teach it the reasonableness of what God requires of his creatures as the condition of their salvation, and to convince it that infinite benevolence and mercy characterize the whole scheme.

As a system of practical duty, enough has been given to lead the soul *that is willing to obey*, far on in the heavenly course. If the brief discussion of some of the doctrines here presented, has excited an interest in the mind of the reader to know more of them, so as to induce him to examine for himself the works of the learned and good, and especially the source of all truth, it will be all that was designed. And if by its instrumentality, one inquiring soul shall be led to Christ, or one prodigal brought back to his Father's house, it will be a greater success than I have dared to anticipate.

Reader, will *you* be that ONE.

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